

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN, MIDDLE CLASS PARENTS LEARN AND ENACT A  
RACISM RESISTANT CRITICAL RACE ACHIEVEMENT IDEOLOGY IN THEIR  
ADOLESCENTS IN GIFTED AND AP CLASSES

by

TRACEY S. FISHER

(Under the Direction of Talmadge C. Guy)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of an academic achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Three research questions guided the study: (1) how do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism? (2) how do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism? (3) what are the consequences or results of African American, middle class parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

The method used to gather data in this qualitative study was the person-to-person, semi-structured interview. A modified version of the Seidman (2013) interview method

captured rich, narrative data. A stratified purposeful sample of potential parent participants was accessed at one southeastern high school. Potential parent participants were identified through their African American adolescent children who had earned above average grades, were in AP and gifted classes, and earned high AP national test scores. Participation was voluntary. Additional screening criteria were the parents' college experience and income level. Major themes are: (a) understand that education impacts life quality (b) expect to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites (c) use available resources to support learning (d) engage in high expectation conversations at home (e) network to enhance educational, racial and social class experiences.

Conclusions are that the African American parents in this study intentionally pass on racially and culturally relevant knowledge to their adolescents about academic achievement resisting racism and compel them to be in, excel in, and understand the benefits of, AP and gifted. The parents in this study also reported that their adolescents developed friendships across racial lines in AP and gifted which is a consequence of enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology that includes enhancing their adolescents' social class connections.

**INDEX WORDS:** Adult learning, African American, Black, middle class parent engagement, parent involvement, advanced placement (AP), adolescent achievement, gifted education, achievement ideology, adult education, critical race achievement ideology

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN, MIDDLE CLASS PARENTS LEARN AND ENACT A  
RACISM RESISTANT CRITICAL RACE ACHIEVEMENT IDEOLOGY IN THEIR  
ADOLESCENTS IN GIFTED AND AP CLASSES

by

TRACEY S. FISHER

B.A., Howard University, 1981

M. Ed., The University of Georgia 2008

(Under the Direction of Talmadge C. Guy)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

© 2015  
Tracey S. Fisher  
All Rights Reserved

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN, MIDDLE CLASS PARENTS LEARN AND ENACT A  
RACISM RESISTANT CRITICAL RACE ACHIEVEMENT IDEOLOGY IN THEIR  
ADOLESCENTS IN GIFTED AND AP CLASSES

by

TRACEY S. FISHER

(Under the Direction of Talmadge C. Guy)

Major Professor: Talmadge C. Guy

Committee: Juanita Johnson Bailey  
Laura L. Bierema  
Cheryl Fields-Smith

Electronic Version Approved:

Julie Coffield  
Interim Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2015

## DEDICATION

First, I give thanks to God for leading me through this very challenging and demanding journey. God created me and provided a deep well from which to draw strength of will, tenacity, and fortitude to see this through.

Second, I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and brilliant parents who are the foundation of my life. Their love and support have always carried me. My dear mother, Shirley Herbert Simmons, there is no mother greater. Professionally, until your retirement, you were a passionate, innovative and creative educator who touched the lives of thousands of children. You are a humanitarian with a loving and giving heart, and you are a role model beyond measure. My dear father, Halevy Hercules Simmons, your audacious, bodacious zest for life, keen wisdom and certified architectural genius, will always sustain me, even as you look down from your place in heaven. I truly love both of you.

Third, I dedicate this dissertation to my extraordinarily remarkable husband, Terence Brooks Fisher. Without you I would not have prevailed. Your kindness, patience, strength, good humor, and positive soul, I do not deserve. Your exceptionally generous spirit and willingness to give me time and space to accomplish this endeavor will never be forgotten. I am devoted to you. You are truly my best friend, protector, and hero. I will always love you.

Fourth, I dedicate this dissertation to my two children, Terence II and Taylor. I am incredibly blessed to have you. You inspire great joy and tremendous pride in my heart each day. Thank you for lighting up my life forever. You are love.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many who have helped to support making this dissertation a reality. Without all of you I would not have prevailed. I too often could not see what you wanted or expected me to do, but ultimately something significant would be revealed to help to sustain me. Thank you very much.

I acknowledge my major professor, Dr. Talmadge Guy. I wholeheartedly believe that you are “grace” personified. You have treated me, the spitfire, with compassion and care. I have learned so much from you in this journey. The dissertation quality would not have been what it is without you. The time spent discussing and mulling over what I was discovering along the way was priceless. No one else could have helped me elicit the deep level of understanding of this process as you. Thank you very much.

I acknowledge the other members of my doctoral committee – Dr. Juanita Johnson Bailey, Dr. Laura Bierema and Dr. Cheryl Fields-Smith. All of you helped to inspire different parts of what is captured in this study. You each pushed me to think and to change and to grow. Thank you so much for dedicating your time and energy to this study.

I acknowledge the eight parents who took part in this study who entrusted their experiences to me, and gave me such profound insight into what strong, determined, focused parenting is all about. Your stories, once missing from the literature, can now be heard. I know that you want me to also write a book on even more that we could have

conversed about! You are all such dedicated and wonderful parents. This dissertation is a part of your legacy of support of your children. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	<i>vi</i>
LIST OF TABLES .....	<i>xii</i>
LIST OF FIGURES .....	<i>xiii</i>
CHAPTER	
1    INTRODUCTION .....	3
Background to the Problem.....	6
Conceptualizing Middle Class Status for African Americans.....	9
African American Parents of Academic Achievers .....	11
Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study .....	12
Problem Statement .....	17
Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....	20
Study Significance.....	22
Chapter Summary.....	27
2    REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	30
Cultural Ideology in Support of Academic Achievement .....	32
Parent Aspirations and Academic Achievement of Children.....	36
African American Parent Aspirations and Academic Achievement of Children.....	38
African American Parent Engagement and Achievement Dissertations .....	43

African American Parent Engagement and Achievement Ideology .....	46
Parenting and Homeplace.....	56
Transformative Learning Theory and Skin Color Privilege.....	57
White Privilege and Family-Relevant Research .....	61
African American, Middle Class and Family-Relevant Research .....	65
Chapter Summary.....	68
3 METHODOLOGY .....	70
Design of the Study .....	70
Qualitative Inquiry .....	71
Interview Methods.....	72
Research Design .....	73
Narrative Inquiry as Methodology .....	78
Sample Selection .....	78
Study Context and Data Collection Methods .....	84
Methodological Issues in Researching African American Participants .....	90
Narrative Analysis Methods.....	93
Data Analysis Process .....	96
Trustworthiness .....	101
Chapter Summary.....	104
4 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES.....	106
Chad Clarke .....	107
Claire Clarke.....	111
Athena Anderson.....	113

Adam Anderson.....	116
Draco Diamond .....	118
Diana Diamond.....	120
Halle Harlowe.....	122
Giselle Gavin.....	125
Participant Profile Summary .....	128
<b>5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSES .....</b>	<b>130</b>
Findings Related to Research Question #1.....	133
Findings Related to Research Question #2.....	141
Findings Related to Research Question #3.....	164
Chapter Summary.....	175
<b>6 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>177</b>
The Persistence of Racism .....	177
Adult Educator Accountability.....	179
Summary of the Study.....	180
Conclusion 1.....	183
Conclusion 2.....	191
Conclusion 3.....	199
Study Implications for Adult Education Practice.....	202
Study Implications for Theory .....	207
Chapter Summary.....	213
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>236</b>

A	IRB Approval .....	236
B	Online Screening Questionnaire .....	237
C	Interview Guide I .....	238
D	Interview Guide II.....	239
E	Research Participation Recruitment Letter of Interest.....	240
F	Sample Memo 1/Audit Trail .....	241
G	Sample Memo 2 .....	243
-	H Transcript Excerpt/Theme Coding.....	245

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Parent Data .....	82
Table 2: Adolescent Data.....	82
Table 3: Summary of Findings .....	132

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Visual Concept Map.....	97
-----------------------------------	----

## PROLOGUE<sup>1</sup>

A fifteen year old girl was accused of cheating on an essay in her accelerated English class in high school. She was the only Black person in the class, and the only person accused of cheating. “Stay after school!” the teacher shouted after everyone received their papers back except for her. The girl was confused, but she waited, as the teacher had asked, at the end of the school day. The teacher said, “You really don’t expect me to believe that you wrote these words in this paper yourself do you? I’m going to watch you rewrite this. Define every word underlined.” Cheating? The girl felt nauseated and dizzy. The teacher thought she copied her paper from someone. The girl sat down and easily rewrote and redefined all of the “big” words in the paper without hesitancy as the teacher watched each pen stroke. The teacher read the rewritten essay with the simpler verbiage, glared at the student, and then back again at the essay. She began to slowly turn red. She told the girl to leave her classroom. On the long walk home the girl cried. When her parents returned home from work they asked her what was wrong, and she told them. They explained that they too had been hurt by ignorant people, and that they were proud of how she handled the situation.

Shortly after that incident the teacher would not return to that classroom, or to the school. I was that young girl. My father tenderly put his hand on my shoulder a few weeks later and said, “Some people are as ignorant as they are allowed to be... you rose above it.” What this teacher did not understand was the parental support that my parents would exercise on my behalf. My mother, an elementary school teacher, and my father, a licensed, professional architect, often talked about how their achievement, attitude, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Prologue details have been altered to maintain the teacher’s anonymity.

integrity stopped ignorance, and how my achievement, attitude, and integrity would continue to help me as well. That teacher also did not understand the social and professional connections my parents would use to dismantle her powerful attempt to denigrate my presence in that accelerated English class. My parents always encouraged discussing my school experiences with them, and not to take on the problems others had with my skin color as mine. In addition, they handled that teacher through their connections with the power brokers within the school system. I eventually became a news reporter following college graduation. Years later I became a high school English teacher. What has stuck with me regarding my parents' engaged guidance and support of my educational experiences in high school so long ago was that forging ahead academically and personally in the face of oppression can be a power and opportunity equalizer.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The events in the Prologue happened to me long ago, but I vividly recall how badly I was made to feel. Experiences like this still happen today; some are more subtle, and some are far worse. Pessimism about African American intelligence and academic achievement capacity endures (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003).

African American, middle class parents of highly successful adolescents in Advanced Placement (AP) classes and Gifted Education programs in high school settings with White adolescents from similar middle class family backgrounds challenge dominant, oppressive, hegemonic discourse generalized about Black parents, their children, and their interest in, and attainment of, above average academic achievement. Insidious public narratives persist that African Americans are inherently intellectually inferior (Andrews, 2009; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008), and that Black parents are less interested in supporting their children's education as others. In fact, Black parents are very involved in their children's educational experiences (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau, 2003). Middle class parents, Black and White, model and share mainstream culture with their children, and commonly share with them the value of educational attainment to long term quality of life (Lareau, 2003). Education has been a primary means used to socialize individuals into mainstream culture (Guy, 1999). Qualitative research on Black, middle class, adult parents can inform scholarship about powerful parenting behaviors shared with adolescents that help to resist

undermining societal messages regarding academic achievement and race. Hooks (1990) discussed how African Americans throughout history recognized the value of “homeplace as a site of resistance” (p. 41) to racism, and as a place of “warmth and comfort and shelter” (p. 41) and a safe space. According to hooks (1990), homeplace was historically a place for growth and development “where Black people could affirm one another, and by doing so heal many of the wounds inflicted” (p. 42) by racism. What do African American families discuss in the home today about racial identity, racism and academic achievement? Parents’ transformative meaning making supportive of an academic achievement identity viewed through a “racialized” (Outlaw, 1996) lens will thus be observed. Racialized histories and identities are defined as ordered constructions of the world; adults observe racial group membership through positive identity identification when viewed through a racialized lens (Colin & Guy, 1998; Outlaw, 1996).

Analyzing race from a philosophically proactive dimension of positive, African American self-identity focuses on adult criticality that is racialized (Colin & Guy, 1998; Brookfield, 2005; Outlaw, 1996). Black, middle class parents, like White, middle class parents, are watchful of their children’s experiences, and not only expect those experiences to be positive, but work to ensure that they are (Lacy, 2007; Lareau, 2003). Critically alert Black adults can, through a racialized worldview, skillfully detect ideological distortions visited upon them, and are devoted to self-directed actualization and change (Colin & Guy, 1998). Absent from scholarly literature is an understanding of the ways that Black, middle class parents proactively negotiate their own social identities which also includes the goal of nurturing a positive Black, middle class identity among their children (Lacy, 2007). Scholarship has not addressed how Black, middle class

parents help to socialize their children in becoming critically aware of, and resistant to, racism in academically competitive and socially exclusive, classes or programs in high school such as AP and Gifted Education, where they are most often in the minority. A body of research is absent that examines potential distinctions in the work involved for Black, middle class parents to deliberately and distinctively construct a Black, middle class identity in their children, even as they seek to provide them with social advantages that they would receive if they were White and middle class (Lacy, 2007, pp. 7-8).

Having to precisely work as a parent to generate an understanding in Black, middle class adolescents that race matters distinctively for them and that it matters in their schooling experiences in particular, has not been studied. Teachers and others in school settings can explicitly or subtly convey disbelief in a Black child's ability for high academic achievement unless counter narratives about the child's identity as an intellectual being are intentionally passed on to him or her (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003, p. 79). Black, middle class parents understand the potential for inequity in educational environments for their children due to race, regardless of social class within their racial group (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

For Black, middle class parents to better ensure that their adolescents are welcomed into, and have the opportunity to achieve in, academically competitive programs and classes they must be vigilant in helping safeguard them from racism. Critically questioning and challenging hegemony can transform adults' meaning perspectives and thus their behavior (Cranton, 2006). There is not a significant body of qualitative research examining how racism, race, social class, and above-average academic achievement particularly intertwine for more affluent African American

parents, families, and their academically talented adolescents in AP and Gifted Education programs in middle class high schools.

### **Background to the Problem**

Black people who are middle class understand that a hierarchy of privilege and power exists in America that permeates social, political, economic, and educational opportunity, which impacts not only their life quality but the lives of their children (Bowser, 2007; Cose, 1993; Graham, 1999; Lacy, 2007). Black, middle class adults also recognize the tenuousness of their social, economic, and political status and the tenuousness of facilitating and extending social status benefits to their children (Bowser, 2007; Graham, 1999). African Americans have long used education to impact quality of life by formally organizing their own schools and supporting public education since the 1860s (Stubblefield & Keene, 1994). Education has been crucial to supporting Black upward mobility. Blacks have been committed to education, over generations, for the reproduction of Black leadership and intellectual and academic achievement (Bell, 1992; Perry et al., 2003). As central to upward mobility as formal education has been for Black people, so has the development of a distinct philosophical identity formation of intellectual capacity. African Americans' collective experiences with education have been passed down in oral narratives regarding intellectual capability tied to schooling, achievement, and life quality (Perry et al., 2003, pp. 12-13).

Qualitative research on Black, middle class adult parents can inform scholars and adult education practitioners about the impact of Black parents' racialized meaning perspectives on adolescent academic achievement. This can provide invaluable research for education professionals and concerned actors working with parents of adolescents.

Research that explores how some forms of parent engagement work to help adolescents rein in racial inequity in education environments is imperative. Qualitative research on Black, middle class parents explores roadblocks and challenges specific to the group, and it can also help to critically expose racism issues, problems, and concerns regarding minority academic achievement beyond the issues of poverty and access. Qualitative research on Black, middle class parents who share ideological perspectives with their offspring that help to support above-average achievement and mitigate racism can help critically inform concerned actors about the impact of parental support that works to help fulfill the academic potential of ethnic minority adolescents.

Poverty impacts opportunity and achievement outcomes in education, and not just for African Americans, but for most poor students. Poverty can be a very real limiter of options. However, the marrying of poverty with academic underachievement and disinterest is a particular stereotype leveled at Black people, and is without scientific foundation. The myth of inherent low intelligence and academic disinterest extends the dominant cultural stereotype generalized about Blacks (Perry et al., 2003). Consequently, there is a growing argument by concerned scholars that much of the research on Black parents, students, and low academic achievement is flawed at the foundation; it has overwhelmingly blamed Black families and not education professionals, institutions or school systems for the academic achievement gap. Examining how race affects the reproduction of inequality in allegedly open and integrated school settings is needed (Perry et al., 2003). Research on Black people that excludes or does not distinguish between Black people of economic advantage and the economically disadvantaged has inaccurately characterized issues in education faced by

this wide-ranging group, and has at best masked, and at worst, ignored or outright dismissed systemic problems not associated with poverty.

Black, middle class parents' meaning perspectives on race, economic advantage, and academic achievement have not been examined by academics, thus a truly comprehensive body of research is conspicuously absent. The impact that poverty can have on Black parents, students, families, and adolescent academic achievement can lead to very serious, but also very different issues. A vast achievement gap persists even between Black and White children who ostensibly come from similar socio-cultural backgrounds and who attend the same schools (Perry et al., 2003, p. 7). Racism, not intelligence, is very highly implicated in disparity in Gifted and AP courses in public schools (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008; Whiting & Ford, 2009).

The task of academic achievement for African Americans is distinctive (Perry et al., 2003). Scholarly literature, however, has overwhelmingly focused on negative academic outcomes of African Americans and not on distinctive equity issues (Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010). Scholars must challenge and change research foci that predominantly focus on Black poverty, i.e., poor schools, limited resources, and quality teachers, as being at the core of exclusion from high quality, rigorous schooling experiences. Low teacher expectations and exclusion from consideration to participate in high quality academic classes have much to do with souring ethnic minority academic achievement potential. The ability to academically achieve has nothing to do with race, but has everything to do with opportunity. Enduring negative societal messages about African American intelligence are scientifically unfounded; who gets into Gifted and Talented public education programs is rooted in racism (Morris, 2002).

It has been posited that because the dominant cultural narrative continues to question the intellectual competence of African Americans today, affirmation of intelligence and intellectual capacity by a very strong adult support system must happen outside of school in order for Black youth to academically achieve in school (Perry et al., 2003). Black, middle class parents nurture social identity in their children to help them maintain status like other middle class parents, yet unlike White, middle class parents they must also include an identity perspective that helps buffer their children against hegemonic views that Blacks are intellectually inferior, a dominant, yet erroneous public perception.

### **Conceptualizing Middle Class Status for African Americans**

“Considerable murkiness” has always surrounded the study of social class (Lareau & Conley, 2008, p. 4) and even “reasonable people disagree about the best way to define the concept of social class” (p.4). There is a lack of consensus among researchers on a definitive definition of social class. It is striking however, that scholarly research across multiple disciplines does show that birth into a specific social class even broadly conceived, shapes life chances (p. 6). In the scholarly literature there is significant variability in definitions of social class (p. 10) and there is real disagreement among scholars on the level of precision, and the best kinds of indicators that are needed for high-quality research on social class (p. 12). Lareau and Conley (2008) found in their research on social class that “people’s answers to simple questions make common sense and correlate with the most straightforward battery of objective conditions – education, occupation, and income” (p. 27). Median household income, self-reported in the county in Georgia that this study’s participants came from in 2008-2012 was \$61, 944 (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2014). In this study, education, occupation and income were utilized to distinguish participants' social class.

Durant & Louden (1986) characterize the Black middle class as "comprised of those Blacks who occupy a similar economic position, share a similar lifestyle and level of living, and engage in common social activities and interaction" (p. 253), and are also often "employed in white-collar occupations, and have acquired at least some college education" (p. 253). Lacy (2007) specifically observed middle class Blacks whose socioeconomic circumstances most closely resembled the White, middle class. She found that the Black, middle class people in this group work as doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and corporate managers, as well as in other occupations that require at least a bachelor's degree (p. 3). These individuals "earned more than \$50,000 annually, and made up 35% of the Black middle class in 2000" (p. 3). In occupation, education, income and housing, this segment of the Black, middle class was equal to the White, middle class (p. 3). Yet, she also found that the middle class status that Whites in this category took for granted, "Blacks who had 'made it' worked harder, more deliberately, and more consistently to make their middle class status known to others" (p.3). In this study, parents self-identified their occupation, education, and income on the questionnaire (see Appendix A). Parents self-identified income as either: (a) \$39,000-49,000; (b) \$50,000-69,000; (c) \$70,000-89,000; (d) \$90,000 and above; \$50,000 or above was the desired family income for this study on Black, middle class parents. Black parents with occupational, educational and income characteristics that were similar, like those in Lacy's (2007) study, and who were the closest economically, educationally and occupationally to parents in the White, middle class were included; this was a part of the

justification for studying this specific group of Black parents, in addition to their adolescents' achievement. This study thus attempts to capture a variety of characteristics that can help to shape, define, and describe the Black middle class through multiple distinctions that they share are socially, economically, and educationally connected.

### **African American Parents of Academic Achievers**

There is a body of literature on gifted and talented, adolescent, African American students (Carter Andrews, 2012; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Ford & Whiting, 2010; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008; Morris, 2002; Whiting & Ford, 2009). Yet, there is no research on African American middle class adult parents' impact on said gifted and talented, African American adolescents who are achievers in gifted and AP. This qualitative study sought to understand how a critical race achievement ideology (CRAI) was shared by a small group of African American middle class parents of adolescents supportive of academic achievement, and a positive social cultural identity about being Black.

Research understanding of the interplay between African American adolescents' ethnic and academic identities (Graham & Anderson, 2008, p. 472), and how African Americans adolescents negotiate "Blackness as an essential component of their academic achievement and overall self concept" has been examined (Graham & Anderson, 2008, p. 472). And, "by listening to students talk about the importance of race and achievement," understandings have been gained regarding "how students construct their racial and achievement self concepts" (Carter Andrews, 2009, p. 297). Understanding what African American parents of highly successful African American students is missing puzzle piece in the literature. Academic achievement identity formation (Carter Andrews, 2009) is a constructed perspective that comes from somewhere. This study investigated a group of

parents who intentionally taught their adolescents to view achievement as resistant to what Carter Andrews (2009) has characterized as “hegemonic notions that academic success is White property and cannot be attained by them” (p. 297).

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study**

The absence of a body of scholarly research on Black, middle class parents of adolescent academic achievers represents a gap in the literature. Academic research on parental involvement and education has long favored the perspectives of White, middle class families to the exclusion of Black families’ perspectives, as well as others (Fields-Smith, 2005). Evidence from history suggests however, that successful African American adults, through lived experience, develop and enact a critically transforming philosophy of mastering school achievement that is contextually distinct due to race and racism, and that this philosophy is passed from one generation to the next (Perry et al., 2003).

Transformative learning theory in part underpinned this study going in. It is derived from traditions of self-awareness, self-emancipation, and a capacity for self-determination to change frames of reference (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Mezirow described a frame of reference as a “meaning perspective” structured by assumptions and expectations through which adults filter sense impressions (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 132). Transformative learning identifies and makes accessible the underlying principles of how adults learn to change their frames of reference (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Adults transform taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) and become more discriminating, reflective, and capable of change (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 8). Transformations often follow a

“disorienting dilemma” resulting in a psychic transformation that does not return back to the old perspective once the transformation has occurred (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 22). The adult learner critically reflects on the experience, talks with others about his or her new worldview, and acts upon the new perspective (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 137). Disquieting experiences with racism occur throughout the lives of Black people (Bell, 1992). In this study I hypothesized that racialized meaning perspectives shared by African American, middle class parents of high achieving adolescents would be observed.

CRAI conceptualized by Carter (2008a), was used to qualitatively study Black, adolescent academic achievers taking part in academically competitive courses at an affluent high school where they were in the racial minority. This theoretical model, used in this study to observe Black, middle class parents’ perspectives about achievement and race, can help generate an understanding of Black, middle class parents’ impact on above-average, adolescent achievement. Carter (2008a) intersected Critical Race Theory (CRT) with mainstream achievement ideology theory to observe an achievement ideology viewed through a lens that considered how the structural conditions of racism interacted with Black, high achieving students’ individual agency (p. 471). Carter (2008a) observed the group of Black adolescents in her study through a new lens of observation focused on an individual’s agency that she found was not only collective and resistant to racism, but supportive of high academic achievement (pp. 470-471). Carter (2008a) observed an achievement ideology and ethos in the student participant group in her qualitative study who reflected an understanding of the importance of academic success and high levels of persistent performance, despite systemic forces that oppress

Black people in society (pp. 471-472). However, in this study the Black, middle class adult parents are instead the focus, and they are the parents of high achieving Black adolescents successful in AP and Gifted Education classes.

Carter's (2008a) theoretical framework used to investigate the achievement perspectives of African American, middle class parents contributes to understanding critically transforming ideology shared with children to help safeguard against racism, resist negative messages about Black intelligence, and support high achievement in AP classes and Gifted Education programs where Black students are most often in the minority.

CRAI is a theoretical model utilized in this study to examine how Black, middle class parents of high achievers look at the world, look at race and achievement, and look to pass on ideological perspectives about race and achievement to their offspring that support achievement. How do some parents teach their offspring to frustrate and impede the threat of racism through above average academic achievement? As previously mentioned, racialized meaning perspectives are observed through the distinctive lens of a racial group's experiences with the world and are viewed through positive positionalities of experience in respect to racial group membership and cultural identity (Hayes & Colin, 1994; Brookfield, 2003). Learning about parents' racialized meaning making perspectives in support of their adolescents' academic achievement in competitive AP classes and Gifted Education programs has significance for adult education research. African American, middle class parents' support of achievement that also helps defend against racism, observed through a theoretical perspective and racialized philosophical lens, can move scholarship about African American parents, students, and families and

education experience towards understanding “critically adaptive behaviors in racially challenging contexts” (Carter, 2008a, p. 466). Examination such as this can open up public and scholarly dialogue about supportive relationships between Black, middle class parents and their academically gifted and talented offspring.

As discussed, Carter (2008a) intersects CRT and traditional achievement ideology in her groundbreaking research. She found that when Black, middle class adolescents' coping behaviors unite with their individual agency, this helped them thwart racism experienced at a predominantly White, middle class school, and also led them to view racial roadblocks as things that could be resisted and disproved by high academic achievement. Applying Carter's (2008a) theoretical model to the meaning making perspectives of Black, middle class parents can provide greater understanding of the significance of Black parents' critical input in transforming the learning experiences of their adolescent offspring about race and achievement.

CRAI examines how an individual's self-perceptions can radically inform ideological constructions and resulting behaviors (Carter, 2008a, p. 468). Carter (2008a) found that the Black, middle class adolescents in her study consciously and critically applied adaptive behaviors to racial conflict experienced in their predominantly White, middle class school by maintaining high grades in their competitive courses, as well as a positive racial self-definition (p. 466). They were using academic achievement as a form of resistance (Carter 2008b) to deal with racism.

How did the adolescents in Carter's (2008a) study come to understand high academic achievement as a form of resistance to racism? Did they learn from family? Using a theoretical mechanism like CRAI to examine Black, middle class parents'

perspectives about dismantling dominant societal messages of academic inadequacy and failure due to race is essential. Do some Black, middle class, parents share self-protecting concepts with their adolescents that help resist racism through high academic achievement? I believe that this study has been an opportunity to observe transformative, critical meaning making by Black, middle class parents that is protective and supportive of their adolescents and also fosters a racialized ideology of high academic achievement and self-empowerment. Do some African American, middle class parents consciously equip their adolescent offspring with critical, racialized meaning perspectives that help them recognize and dismantle oppressive and powerful messages about race and achievement in education environments, thus empowering them towards above average academic success? Understanding the lived experiences of African American, middle class adult parents of academically successful adolescents matters. Identifying meaning making strategy shared at home that encourages a Black social class identity supportive of above average academic achievement that is resistant to racism is important.

Where did Carter's (2008a) students' collective, powerful and transforming coping skills come from as are observed in her qualitative study? Social cultural capital is passed from one generation to the next (Lareau, 2003). Understanding Black, middle class parents' transmission of social cultural capital to their children was essential to this qualitative study. Cultural capital is defined as social cultural logic and skills that translate into different forms of social value (Bourdieu, 1984; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Conley, 2008). Middle class children are trained in the "rules of the game" over a lifetime and acquire from their parents cultural capital that governs the most compatible interactions with institutional representatives (Lareau, 2003, p. 6). This study

investigated whether there was variation in the middle class cultural capital that the Black, middle class parents of a group of high achieving adolescents shared that was racialized and transformative for self-empowerment, high academic achievement, and racism-resistance.

### **Problem Statement**

Middle class Blacks are not mirror images of middle class Whites; a body of evidence supports the suggestion that race is a key indicator in continuing inequity between most Blacks and Whites, even when occupying the same social class (Lacy, 2007). The gap here is the lack of research on middle class African American parents and families. And the lack of research on middle class African American parents of academically high achieving adolescents is glaring. CRAI is used in this study to understand how Black adult parents share academic achievement as adaptive and resilient behavior that works to support positive Black identity formation while also helping to thwart racism. It is important that we understand the nature of the task of academic achievement for African Americans (Perry et al., 2003, p. 87). Research examining “within group” predictors of academic achievement by African American, middle class youth is scant (Eisele, Zand, & Thomson, 2009). Within group research explores distinctions among groups. Even less is known about African American, middle class parents and their impact on their adolescents’ participation in accelerated and rigorous academic programs (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Part of the changing face of America and American public schools includes African American students attending higher ranking, more affluent public schools (Andrews, 2009; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Howard & Reynolds, 2008). However, even in racially mixed communities, African Americans are

most likely to be “spatially limited” in multiple contexts, including in schools (Massey & Denton, 1988). Spatial limitation is unevenness in representation, opportunity, and access. The quest for racial equity and shifting demographic patterns per race and economics are transforming public schools into spaces where more ethnic minority students are present, but these students continue to be segregated by race inside of schools (Orfield, Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2010).

African American families that do not live in or near blighted neighborhoods, and who are more economically advantaged, are a significantly understudied group (Bowser, 2007; Lacy, 2007; Perry et al., 2003). Educators and trainers of adults, educators who interact with the parents of adolescent students, high school administrators, counselors who interact with parents and families, and other interested actors committed to helping foster change in minority academic achievement must shift discourse regarding African American parents, students, and their families toward research rooted in spurring change in academic achievement and closing the gap in public schools. However, the gap does not end following high school. The impact of the education gap, should it continue, could have a profoundly negative impact on the U.S. economy and global competitiveness. The U.S. workforce is undergoing dramatic demographic shifts, including increasing representation by people of color; work environments are changing (Bierema, 2002). To sustain U.S. global market competitiveness, well-educated, creative, highly trained youth will need to come from many diverse groups. Qualitative study of minority parenting practices that support high achievement is information that educators of adults can use to help support historically marginalized adult learners and their families. Adult educators

can help turn learners' lives around so that they become strong agents of change not only for themselves, but for their families (Guy, 1999).

White, middle class parent engagement and student achievement compared to ethnic minority, middle class parent engagement and student achievement is called into question due to theory and research methods traditionally normed per White, European social and cultural models (Wong & Rowley, 2001). Studies comparing middle class Whites to a generalized population of ethnic minorities is apt to be critically flawed at the foundational level. Research is flawed that assumes a White, European, middle class standard of cultural correctness (Wong & Rowley, 2001, p. 58). Examining a purposeful sample of African American, middle class parents' meaning perspectives provides qualitative research understanding about achievement ideology that helps to resist racism, and its impact on adolescents in AP and Gifted Education.

Despite an arduous history of oppression in America, a Black, middle class exists that "testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible" (Baldwin, 1963). Persistent racial discrimination makes it more difficult for Black parents than White parents to comply with school standards, even when they are from the same social class (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Moving education research, policy, practice, and social discourse closer to understanding racialized meaning making ideology shared with adolescents that helps negate racism and supports achievement informs scholarship about the work involved for Black parents to help their offspring succeed in racially challenging contexts. Research in this area has the potential to not only magnify but uncover ongoing racism issues of exclusion from rigorous classes and programs, low teacher expectations, and inequitable treatment and grading in the classroom, which can

also inform the achievement gap. Examining the meaning perspectives of a group of African American parents qualitatively can help with understanding Black, middle class adult frames of reference regarding negotiating race, social class, and academic achievement and the protective impact that some parents' ideological meaning perspectives can have on adolescent achievement and racism resistance.

Public discourse on African American academic underachievement commonly blames Black parents first, Black students second, and the Black community third, and serves as another location for the recycling of dominant culture group chatter that perpetually associates African Americans with moral, cultural, and intellectual deficiency (Perry et al., 2003). African American, middle class parents of academically successful students who have experienced racial challenges and barriers to achievement not associated with poverty can help critically inform research. Black, middle class parents who help to empower their adolescents toward above average academic achievement in advanced courses matter. Qualitative research in this area will give voice to what Black parents of achievers are doing to support their adolescents in academically challenging environments. There are far-reaching implications for schools and systems regarding racism and continued exclusion, low grades, and low test scores of ethnic minorities in AP and Gifted Education when proximity or availability of courses and programs are nonissues.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

Literature tells us that social class impacts parent involvement, engagement, and schooling of White and Black children (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The purpose of this study was to examine African American, middle

class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?
3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

Scholars have not significantly examined above-average academic achievement and social class patterns within racial groups other than Whites (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Eisele et al., 2009, Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010). Understanding within race social cultural power distinctions among African American, middle class parents provides a new focus for examining the influences on constructive academic participation and performance by African American adolescents.

Differences observed through research examining White social classes cannot be assumed to exist in the same ways among social classes within other racial groups (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Research on Black, middle class parents will inform scholars of what is shared with ethnic minority adolescents that helps them gain the social capital necessary to highly achieve in the most rigorous academic programs in high school settings. The argument is not, however, that African American, middle class parents communicate better with their adolescents than other Black parents regarding high academic achievement. Yet, some Black, middle class parents do have academically

high-achieving, adolescent offspring who excel in AP and Gifted Education programs. What this study's participant group of Black, middle class parents is doing to help support the high achievement of their offspring is explored here.

There was not substantial qualitative research found on Black, middle class parents' of adolescent offspring who were above average, academic achievers in AP and Gifted Education. This study can help inform the academic achievement gap from the perspective of Black, middle class adult parents of high achievers. As yet unabated and overwhelmingly negative societal messages about Black underachievement makes for much work on the part of Blacks to intellectually counter social, psychological, and political assaults on racial group competency and educational achievement (Perry et al., 2003, p. 105). Black, middle class parents of adolescent academic achievers can inform academia about social capital at work in families that not only challenges but helps to surmount what can be dominant, racially oppressive forces and systems of power in schools.

### **Study Significance**

This study shifts research foci towards disrupting dominant ideological, cultural, and social myths about Black parents' lacking interest and involvement in their adolescents' education. Examining African American, middle class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education programs charters new ground in exploring race, social class, and academic achievement. Studies of transformational learning have addressed critical situations in life such as dealing with HIV/AIDS (Labra, 2015), cancer (Penner, Eggly, Griggs, Underwood, Orom & Albrecht, 2012), divorce (Kerr Robertson, 2014), becoming

vegan (Greenebaum, 2012), to name a few illustrative examples. However, racism continues to shape lives. For Black families, the struggle to attain educational success has become a major problem. While combating systems of oppression, we know fairly little about the process of learning and transmitting a racism resistant achievement ideology. . Conceptualizing academic success in the context of being a productive member of the Black community has compelled some Black parents to help their children develop an academic achievement ethos despite powerful systemic forces that continue to oppress Blacks in schools (Perry et al., 2003). CRAI observes achievement in the context of being Black, thus the task of adolescent academic achievement is racialized; race informs the construction of achievement beliefs and attitudes (Carter, 2008a). CRAI integrates “a sense of individual agency with awareness and understanding of racism as a structural condition designed to impede upward mobility” (Carter, 2008a, p. 478). CRAI and African American, middle class parents are important in qualitative investigation of individual agency, above average academic achievement, and racism resistance nurtured in adolescence.

Black parents do not want their children locked out of opportunities to academically excel in high school. The presence of African American students in advanced and academically competitive classes in general, and in Gifted Education programs in particular, is rare though (Henfield, Moore, & Wood, 2008). Black parents must become better informed about the far-reaching implications and benefits of accelerated program learning experiences on life beyond high school, and get their adolescents involved in these programs in high school (Henfield et al., 2008, p. 435).

Black, middle class parents of above average academic achievers critically challenge racist hegemony. The ability to rise, despite obstacles, neutralizes and offsets challenges that could inhibit the pursuit of success (Bonner, Jennings, Marbley, & Brown, 2008). African American parents have stories to tell. How one's life world, positionality, and sense of cultural identity ground a racial group's experiences is significant to understanding how life is felt and lived (Brookfield, 2003). Adults interpret, reassess, and modify structures of assumptions and expectations that frame their points of view, and influence their thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and actions (Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). How do Black parents' perspectives about achievement and navigating racism compel what they communicate to their adolescents about achievement in the AP or Gifted classroom? Do Black, middle class parents' meaning perspectives compel them to engage in distinctive, purposeful discourse with their adolescents regarding race, racism and academic achievement? Critical reflection, a distinguishing characteristic of adult learning, questions the integrity of deeply held, overarching societal assumptions and beliefs, and prompts awareness of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and actions (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Learning to develop critically reflective judgments regarding one's beliefs, values, feelings and self-concepts helps adults to challenge or act upon "taken for granted" epistemic assumptions (Mezirow, et al., 2009, p. 29). African American, middle class parents' views of achievement positively allied with race uncover cultural capital inclusive of transformative meaning making that contributes to individual empowerment and thwarts dominant culture hegemony to the contrary.

Transformative learning influences adults' expectations that frame their points of view, beliefs, attitudes, and actions (Mezirow et al., 2009, p. 18). A dimension of the transformative learning process for adults is "instrumental learning," which involves "controlling or managing the environment, or other persons, and includes improving performance" (Mezirow et al., 2009, p. 20). The intentional internalization of an ideology that is oppositional to oppressive, negative ideas about African Americans challenges the dominant culture's "habit of mind" (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 18) that persists in stereotyping African Americans as an inherently intellectually inferior group. It is thus suspected that middle class Whites and Blacks not only differently engage with their cultural capital resources, but that aspects of the cultural capital of middle class Whites differs from that of middle class Blacks that is used to facilitate success in their lived experiences.

Research on Black and White, middle class parents has found that middle class parents communicate and engage with institutions not only differently but more compatibly than do other parents (Lareau, 2003). But educational inequity within the same social class regarding participation and achievement in AP classes and Gifted Education programs by African American adolescents illustrates that something is a problem beyond economic and proximal features that are the same or similar. Black, middle class parents, like middle class parents in general, expect the best classes, teachers, and educational experiences for their offspring. Yet, data show that even for middle class Blacks, a startling picture of educational experience disparity emerges. African American, middle class parents and children have been overlooked in the professional literature regarding issues of educational equity where access or proximity to

accelerated programs and courses are not prevailing problems (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Research is needed that seeks to understand Black, middle class parents' meaning perspectives about achievement and their particular brand of cultural capital, shared with their adolescents, that impacts high achievement and helps to resist racism.

Middle class cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) inclusive of "concerted cultivation" compatible with the framework of behaviors that middle class parents typically pass on to their children help them manage their interactions in institutional settings, and make the rules work more in their favor (Lareau, 2003, pp. 6-7). Despite Lareau's (2003) findings though, the number of African American adolescents who earn passing scores on national tests in academically rigorous courses such as AP is not nearly equal to the number of White adolescents passing the same tests, and the data do not distinguish the socioeconomic backgrounds of participating students' families. African American families with middle class incomes remain less able to transfer their social attainments to outcomes than are Whites (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Racial discrimination in institutions like schools continues under myriad guises, and most are not easily ascertainable (Bell, 1992). Poverty is a considerable problem but represents one part of a much bigger picture of marginalization and exclusion by race. The complex values and actions of Black, middle class parents involved in helping to facilitate above average academic achievement in their adolescents in AP and Gifted Education are explored in this study.

Qualitative research focused on African American, middle class parents and achievement ideology racializes the critique of social capital and academic achievement. As previously mentioned, a racialized view is looking at something through a distinctive lens of a racial group's experience of the world and to view the experience of racial

membership as a positive positionality and cultural identity (Brookfield, 2003). Illuminating achievement ideology used by African American, middle class parents in support of adolescent academic achievement that also can work as a buffer against racial oppression is information that can help change prevailingly negative and inaccurate discourse about African American parents and families, and academic achievement, and potentially spur new theoretical paradigms.

### **Chapter Summary**

My intention was to conduct a rich, qualitative research study on Black, middle class parents' who have enacted an academic achievement ideology in their adolescents that also challenged racist stereotypes that question the existence of Black intelligence and academic ability. Parents share information with their offspring as they grow that can equip and advantage them in ways that help them cope in the world. Dialogue is the primary medium of critical reflection that takes place when experiences are reflected upon, assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and habits of mind are transformed (Taylor, 2009).

Frames of reference are meaning perspectives that structure how adults make sense of the world (Merriam et al., 2007). Adults' frames of reference can be transformed when they become critically reflective about the premise of a problem and, through self-reflection, redefine it (Mezirow et al., 2009, p. 23). Adults recognize, reassess, and modify assumptions that influence thought. Transformative learning frees adults from uncritical acceptance of others' purposes, values, and beliefs (Merriam et al., 2007). Learning about African American, middle class parents' perspectives about race, class, and academic achievement that inspire their adolescent offspring critically focuses

a lens on adult, transformational learning to incite change. Adults become more discriminating and open to change through subjective reframing that occurs when they become coauthors of their own cultural narratives (Mezirow et al., 2009). Developing critically reflective judgment regarding one's beliefs, values, feelings, and self-concepts helps adults challenge or act upon "taken-for-granted" epistemic assumptions (Mezirow et al., 2009, p. 29). Understanding African American, middle class parents' criticality of dominant hegemony, stereotypes, and racism can help to uncover distinctive cultural capital that contributes to personal empowerment.

Research tells us that overarching dimensions of racism can and do supplant the social capital of middle class Blacks in the same or similar social class as Whites (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). A critical approach to adult learning includes unmasking power and contesting hegemony to compel change (Brookfield, 2005). Distancing from, and oppositional reengagement with, the dominant culture is a core learning task in adulthood, per the Frankfurt School, whose founders coined the term *ideology critique* to describe this process in classic critical social theory (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 12-13). Ideology critique contains the promise of social transformation to free people from oppression and to inspire action (Brookfield, 2005). As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, Carter (2008a) intersected CRT and traditional achievement ideology, and she observed high-achieving Black students' individual agency to be racism-resistant and impactful on their academic success and upward social mobility. CRAI, for the adolescents in Carter's (2008a) study, transformed their ways of thinking about high achievement and race.

Transformative meaning making, from a constructivist perspective, which is discussed in Chapter 3, occurs through dialogue, collaborative learning, and cooperative learning (Merriam et al., 2007). Adults transform their frames of reference through experience, critical reflection, and the questioning of dominant culture assumptions. African American parents must intentionally present counter-narratives about Black identity and achievement to their offspring that interrupt teachers and others who explicitly or covertly convey disbelief in their ability (Perry et al., 2003, p. 79).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to understand transformative, racism-resistant meaning making distinctly shared at home by Black, middle class parents with their adolescent offspring that supports students' above-average, academic achievement in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Achievement perspectives of Black, middle class parents of adolescent, above-average academic achievers can inform educators of adults about positive parenting behaviors that impact the educational experiences of parents and their children. Adult educators strive to help individuals who routinely face oppression take control of their lives (Guy, 1999).

Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?
3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

This literature review explores existing scholarly literature about African American, middle class parents' critically transforming ideology shared with their adolescents that encourages and supports above average academic achievement while also resisting

racism. The databases and search terms used to guide and construct this literature review are included, as are literature clarifying the study, as well as the boundaries and limitations of the existing literature in relationship to the study.

Databases used to develop the literature review included: Education Research Complete, SocIndex, Urban Studies, JSTOR, Gil, ERIC, PsychInfo, ProQuest, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Social Sciences, African American, Galileo Dissertation Abstracts, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, and Academic Search Complete.

Subject and term searches included but were not limited to: African American/Black, parents' engagement and academic achievement, African American/Black, middle class, parents' engagement and academic achievement, social class and adolescent academic achievement, The Black/African American, middle class, The Black/African American, middle class and academic achievement, Transformative Learning, Transformative Learning and race, Transformative Learning, race and educational achievement, African American adults and Transformative Learning, African American/Black adolescents and AP and academic achievement, African American/Black adolescents and Gifted Education, parents' academic expectations and adolescent achievement, adolescence, race, and Gifted Education participation, African American/Black participation in AP, academic achievement, race and African American/Black, middle class parent involvement, race and academic achievement, Black/African American achievement and AP, and African American participation in rigorous courses and the academic performance gap.

Also addressed in this chapter is literature on transformative learning supportive of investigating the topic of African American, middle class parent engagement and racialized achievement ideology shared with their adolescents. Subject and search terms included those from the initial search, as well as the databases. Also, literature on the topics of CRT & Transformative Learning, Transformative Learning & Education & African Americans, Transformative Learning & Education & Racial Socialization, Transformative Learning & Education & Families, Transformative Learning & Education & Critical Theory, Achievement Gap & Parents, and Transformative Learning and Race & Academic Achievement was explored.

There were no studies specifically on the topic of African American, middle class parents' critically transformative, racism resistant meaning perspectives shared with their academically high achieving adolescents. Later in this chapter, however, literature closest to my study's topic will be discussed. Six articles with the greatest relevance related to clarifying the boundaries of my study are examined. Six dissertations with the greatest relevance to the study are also examined. Seven articles with the greatest relevance to transformative learning theory, critical theory, CRT, meaning making, social class, and parents' impact on the schooling experiences of adolescents are also examined. The analysis of data in this literature review will help elucidate the significance of the study's topic.

### **Cultural Ideology in Support of Academic Achievement**

Qualitative study of the sociocultural implications of parenting adolescents, racial identity, social class, and academic achievement can add to research understanding of a critical parenting ideology that intersects a strong racial and social identity with high

achievement. Adult education concepts of self-direction, critical reflection, and transformative learning can be emancipatory and can help to elicit social, political, and ideological change in the meaning perspectives of Black parents of adolescents.

Literature that argues that parents do not play a significant role in the academic outcomes of their children is excluded from this review. Researchers across disciplines and demographics who do support the concept appear to concur that parent engagement and involvement positively impact the educational outcomes of their children (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hayes, 2011; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Jeynes, 2005; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2005; Spera, Wentzel, & Matto, 2007; Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010). That literature is included here.

Also excluded from this study is literature that argues who is middle class. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, who it is that actually comprises the middle class has involved constantly shifting characteristics in scholarly spheres that no single discipline has agreed upon (Lareau & Conley, 2008). Sixteen years ago, noted researcher Mary Pattillo-McCoy (1999) described the Black middle class as comprising three-fourths of African Americans. Middle class is a “notoriously elusive category based on a combination of socioeconomic factors, mostly income, occupation, and education” (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999, p. 13). She characterized Blacks in the middle class as occupying primarily socioeconomically lower middle class careers such as secretary, computer technician, and sales representative. Pattillo-McCoy (1999) qualitatively researched the ecological contexts of one Black middle class community threatened by racial segregation, fewer services than neighboring White middle class communities, bad schools, and economic fragility, and the impact that these distinctions had on raising and

educating Black middle class children and adolescents. The median middle class Black family income in the community that Pattillo-McCoy observed in 1999 was \$40,000 annually, and 70% of the community's residents were home owners. A year later, in Pattillo-McCoy's study in 2000 she explained, "I follow the lead of other scholars who have used white-collar employment as the marker of middle class status" (Pattillo-McCoy, 2000, p. 227). She added, "I define any neighborhood with a median family income that is above the city of Chicago median (\$30,000) as middle class" (Pattillo-McCoy, 2000, p. 227). A comprehensive report on America's middle class, which was developed in the last five years by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics, and Statistics Administration for the Office of the Vice President of the United States Middle Class Task Force in 2010, specifically framed the middle class by income as well, and this study is also in part guided by an income frame. Income range, first discussed in Chapter 1, was included in the initial questionnaire for this study to help determine potential participants' social class. Helping to also guide this study is Black, middle class household income of \$50,000 as characterized by Lacy (2007), as well as occupation and education data that most closely resembled White, middle class family characteristics. In addition to the couples who participated in this study, two single parents met the participation criteria and took part. Annual income of \$50,000 and above was used to frame income for the purposes of this study. As first mentioned in Chapter 1, median household income self-reported in the Georgia county that study participants came from in 2008-2012 was \$61, 944 (U.S. Census Bureau Report, March 2014). Median income was higher than the state of Georgia's self-reported median family income of \$49,604.

In addition to middle class family income, at least one parent had to have college experience. A four-year college degree was most desirable. However, African American parents with a combined family income of \$50,000 or above and one parent with some college experience, meet this study's minimum income and education criteria. The most desirable participants will meet income, and as discussed in Chapter 1, what Lacy (2007) characterized in her findings as African American, middle class adults, i.e., doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants, corporate managers, or those requiring a college degree, as most closely mirroring their White counterparts in the same middle class category (p. 15). Participants in this study closely mirrored Whites in the middle class per income, education, and occupation. This was part of the parents' social class criteria regarding screening and potential participation in this study, and the justification.

Research informs us that high schools in poorer communities commonly lack resources to provide the highest quality public education for adolescents (McBride Murry, Berkel, Gaylord-Harden, Copeland-Linder, & Nation, 2011). Family poverty strongly indicates the likelihood of underachievement compared to peers from middle and high income households (Taylor, 2005). By observing African American, middle class parents of adolescents in high schools that offer AP and Gifted Education classrooms, understandings that will emerge about race and achievement will not be about course availability or locating qualified teachers to teach students. What is rarely addressed in an explicit, thoughtful, and critical manner is the role of racism in perpetuating educational discrepancy (Howard, 2010), and in particular in middle class schools. Discomfort surrounding discussing race and educational equity is reflective of the larger social context in which race is viewed in the U.S. (Howard, 2010). Oppression

in many forms contributes to the achievement gap between most Black and White students in public high schools. Abundant scholarly research attests to unequal representation in advanced and accelerated courses, low test scores, teacher bias, inequity in course outcomes, higher expulsions and disciplinary consequences, and lower track placement. Despite the removal of formal race-based barriers to opportunity, the United States continues to be highly stratified along lines of race, class, and gender today (Andersen & Collins, 2007). Invisible barriers to equality and equity are distinctive across racial lines in public schools today (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Perry et al., 2003).

### **Parent Aspirations and Academic Achievement of Children**

Scholarly research conducted over the last decade on parents' aspirations for their children's academic achievement, inclusive of African Americans, is included in this review. Fan (2001) observed parents' aspirations for their children's educational attainment among the four largest ethnic groups in the U.S.: White, Black, Asian, and Latino/Hispanic stood out as having a positive impact on students' academic growth. This study does not specifically inform us of how parents' aspirations translate to children's achievement, however. Fan and Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of hundreds of studies to try to compare empirical research conducted on parents' influence on children's achievement. However, only 25 empirical studies were found to be usable according to Fan and Chen (2001). They found that there was "a great deal of inconsistency in the empirical literature" (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 17). A suggestion for future study by these researchers was to more carefully consider the contextual dimensions of how parents' impact their children's academic achievement, and to

observe the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) within the research framework. Their rationale for the necessity of contextual, qualitative research on parents' roles in supporting academic achievement supports my study's intent.

Studies conducted by Diamond and Gomez (2004), Jeynes (2005; 2007), and Spera, Wentzel, and Matto (2007) observed and included dimensions of social class, race, and parental influence on children's academic achievement, but none of them focused specifically on African American, middle class parents of adolescents.

Diamond and Gomez (2004) observed working and lower class parents and their perceptions of the quality of the schools that their children attended. A significant aspect of this study was the examination of within-race characteristics regarding parents' perceptions of school quality. The Diamond and Gomez (2004) study participants, however, were economically disadvantaged parents, not middle class parents. This study's closest relevance to my intended study is its focus on parents' perceptions of high quality education environments.

Jeynes' (2005, 2007) quantitative studies were (a) an examination of the impact of two-parent, African American families on academic achievement and (b) a meta-analysis of the impact of African American parent involvement at the school site on academic achievement in high school. Findings in 2005 included that the greatest positive impact on academic achievement was whether a child came from an intact, two-parent family. In his second study, Jeynes (2007) found a broad association between parent involvement and school achievement. Findings by Jeynes (2007) suggest parent involvement is one way of reducing the achievement gap between Whites and Blacks (p. 103). However, the researcher called for contextual understanding of findings which is absent that explains

why two parents in the home is important to academic achievement and why a parent's presence at school is also important to achievement.

Spera, Wentzel, and Matto (2007) quantitatively examined the "parental aspirations" of African American, Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic parents of middle and high school students. The self-reported data were gathered from 13,577 parents during the 2000 U.S. Census and used in this research study. Although parents' aspirations were high across the four racial groups, findings also suggested that the largest discrepancy between parents' aspirations and children's actual academic achievement were with African Americans and Hispanics. A significant matter not included in this study was whether the African Americans and Hispanics had access to similar or equal high quality educational experiences as the White families included in the study. This is, in my view, integral to the process of comparing racial groups in regards to the realization of parents' educational aspirations.

### **African American Parent Aspirations and Academic Achievement of Children**

Howard and Reynolds (2008) qualitatively examined African American, middle class parent involvement and the educational experiences of their children with regards to equity, opportunity, and academic achievement. Their research exposed today's pervasive underachievement by Black, middle class children attending predominantly White, middle class schools. The researchers provided space for the voices of concerned African American, middle class parents to be heard regarding this problem. Howard and Reynolds (2008) argued that African American, middle class parents have been ignored and overlooked in the scholarly literature on underachievement and that non-White and non-Asian students in middle class schools are frequently overlooked in

underachievement and parent involvement data reporting (p. 80). These authors articulated that the data are not only disturbing, but that despite the absence of literature reporting on this issue, African American, middle class parents are aware. A significant finding in this study was that the African American, middle class parents participating in this study said that educational equity in the affluent, White, middle class schools located in the neighborhoods where they also live, and where they send their children to school, remains elusive due to racial discrimination. Howard and Reynolds (2008) called for research on the oppressive role that race plays in the “everyday experiences of non-White individuals as they seek access and acceptance” (p. 88). These researchers articulated, perhaps most significantly, that reconsideration of African American parents’ meaning making regarding their roles in the educational experiences of their children merit multiple levels of reconceptualized research attention. The intersection of race and class intimate a complicated, complex picture of African American, middle class parents’ beliefs about schools and how they provide effective support roles in the education process (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 90).

Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2010) examined the role that parental involvement plays as a buffer to challenges related to school support and academic expectations of high-achieving, African American, adolescent, high school students (p. 137). The African American “high achieving” students who participated in this study were all part of a special math and science program held on a specialty science and math campus. Participants were high school students who reported on their perceptions of academic support given to them by their parents, captured in multiple surveys. The researchers hypothesized that “high levels of parental involvement may offset or buffer low levels of

school support" (Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010, p. 139). Although this study informed us that the student participants were African American, as were their parents, and that they attended a public high school in a large, southern, and urban city, specific information on the racial makeup of their school and about the special math and science program in which they all took part was conspicuously absent from their study. Adolescents in this study reported high levels of school support and also indicated that within their school environment they felt a sense of belonging and encouragement. This study, as mentioned, was student-focused. The inclusion of parents' perspectives could have provided additional context regarding the impact of race, achievement, and parents' support.

Hayes (2011) compared home and school parental involvement of high school age, African American adolescents within the racial group by focusing on and examining responses of low and high SES, or the social class status, of participants within this one racial group. African American parents self-reported demographic information, as well as completed questionnaires regarding their level of parent involvement in their adolescents' lives.

As was found in other studies previously mentioned, parents' educational aspirations for their adolescents were high regardless of SES. Findings were that economics played a small role in the level of home and school involvement for the parents in this study. Hayes's (2011) suggestions for future research included examining different types of parent involvement by African American parents who are not from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as national studies that would include trying to understand parent involvement differences that might arise due to where people live.

Information about the positive impact of African American parents on the academic outcomes of Black children and adolescents continues to grow. Banerjee, Harrell, and Johnson (2011) found that parents who actively provided messages for their children about the significance of belonging to their racial group, and who also provided context in understanding race and racism, helped their adolescent children develop a strong positive self-concept that impacts achievement over time. These researchers also found, however, that the combined impact of racial socialization, parent involvement, and children's cognitive outcomes was still largely missing from the scholarly literature. This study did not distinguish subjects by social class, nor did it focus on accelerated course participation, but it did offer findings about meaning making by parents and the impact of sharing racial belonging messages on children's academic achievement.

Zhang, Haddad, Torres, and Chen's (2011) empirical study about reciprocal relationships between parents' and adolescent students' expectations, as well as adolescents' academic achievement, was comparative by race. This study's participants were Asian, Hispanic, African American, and White parents of adolescents whose levels of reciprocal expectations and outcomes were compared. Findings in this comparative study of four racial groups included that parent and student expectations and student outcomes were found to be weakest among African Americans. A limitation of this study, stated by this study's authors, included the acknowledgment that "locus of control" (Zhang, Haddad, Torres, & Chen, 2011, p. 488), or the extent to which people psychologically perceive control of what goes on around them, could have significantly limited their study's findings. Further justification for my pending study is here with these researchers' call for understanding parental meaning perspectives that work to

enhance adolescent academic achievement and limit, or serve to buffer against, racial impediments and constraints.

Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2004; 2005) posited that because researchers continue to compare all African American students to middle class White students, significant within group socioeconomic, psychological, and behavioral differences are repeatedly overlooked. Their 2005 study was derived from students and parents who completed multiple questionnaires. Findings included that African American adolescents learned concrete coping skills and strategies to effectively engage and achieve in school, and the high expectations of the adults in their lives were important and impactful. SES inclusive of the education level of the mother was also strongly related to adolescents' academic performance (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004). In Sirin and Rogers-Sirin's (2005) study, the authors found White teachers' expectations of minority students were largely culturally mismatched, and that diverse school children faced negative teacher expectations that likely adversely affected these students' performance (p. 20). Their study opens up discussion about issues of the cultural competence and sensitivity of the education professionals with whom Black families interact. Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2004, 2005) called for research on the parents and education professionals in the lives of African American students that help them proactively engage in schools. Welch's (2011) findings concurred with this view. Public perceptions about ethnically diverse students are prevailingly negative, and this thinking represents a "deficit model" (Welch, 2011, p. 41) perspective in education contexts. Welch's (2011) "different is not deficit" (p. 35) perspective includes that socio-cultural difference between Black and White students and their families is at the root of the achievement gap and that variations in social

interactions with White teachers are often misread regarding diverse students' abilities, intelligence, and learning styles. Welch (2011), like Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2004; 2005), posits the steering of parents, educators, and scholars away from the deficit model perspective regarding achievement and race. Issues of equality, achievement, and social justice need a chance to be transformed for the public good (Welch, 2011, p. 34).

### **African American Parent Engagement and Achievement Dissertations**

There were no dissertations located with a central focus on African American, middle class parents' enactment of a racialized ideology of achievement with their above average, high achieving adolescent offspring that acts as a buffer against racism. In fact, none of the dissertations close to my intended topic were parent-focused. There were six student-focused dissertations that included some articulation of the importance of parent engagement to their academic success, however.

A recent dissertation on mathematically high achieving, African American males attending college found that the study's participants articulated that parental support impacted their academic success (Cluster, 2012). Questionnaires and interviews were used in this qualitative study to observe the personal and schooling factors that contributed to their success. This mathematics education study, which focused on African American, male, high academic achievers, although not parent focused, has relevance to my study. The data collected included the participants' articulation of their parents' positive influence on their high academic achievement.

Also articulated in a second, college-age, student-focused dissertation on African American males and females was the impact of parent involvement (Maddox, 2011). In this qualitative study, observing the racial identity development of Black students at a

predominantly White institution was the focus. Although this study was not parent focused, nor solely on high academic achievers, it did focus on racial identity and awareness of race and its impact on educational experience in school environments that can be racially challenging. In addition, this qualitative study's participants also discussed the significance of parental support in positive racial identity development and in moving forward in their college studies.

Moon (2011) observed in her dissertation on African American, high achieving, male adolescents attending high school and the academic achievement gap, that the Black male participants that she interviewed were very aware of discrimination in school and in the classroom due to race. Student participants also firmly stated that parent visibility and involvement were critical to their high academic achievement. Interestingly in this study, the adolescents also soundly discounted the "acting White" assumption that they had heard was said in research regarding what their peers were supposed to be saying to insult and derail those who are Black and who academically achieve. They had not experienced it, and they did not believe it (Moon, 2011, p. 76). This study's significance to my pending study is also its articulation of African American parent involvement as important to high achievement.

Hammond (2006) observed several consistent themes among academically gifted, African American female participants in his dissertation study. The consistent themes here included parental engagement and support, and positive racial identity. The qualitative interview method of data collection was utilized, and participants were interviewed about their academic and educational experiences. The importance of academic achievement emanated from their parents and was an important value

emphasized in the home, as stated by the participants (Hammond, 2006, p. 46). This study has relevance to my pending study because it, too, discusses the impact of African American parent engagement and high achievement and a recurring theme among African American adolescent high achievers.

Two dissertation studies, both from 2002, in counseling and educational psychology, respectively, focused on family, identity, and academic achievement. In her quantitative study that used statistical analysis, Bell-Hill (2002) attempted to determine a relationship between family environment and academic achievement. Female participants were from two high schools, self-identified as African American, and were ages 14-19. Findings emanating from this quantitative study relative to my study were:

- (a) the impact of a two-parent household on academic development of their offspring and
- (b) findings that indicated that the families of African American females provide strength and resources to combat social pressures (Bell-Hill, 2002, p. 82).

In the Long (2002) qualitative dissertation study, African American students' self-perceptions about high achievement were the focus. How these participants described their potential to achieve and how their families, teachers, and peers impacted their achievement was observed. Interviews were conducted to understand the participants' sense of self, family support, and school experiences. What is relative here to my research study is the articulation by all of the study's participants that their African American parents did model strong achievement value-s for them (Long, 2002, p. 148). Parents in this student-focused study also encouraged and supported their high achievers and monitored their achievement performance (Long, 2002, p. 147).

### **African American Parent Engagement and Achievement Ideology**

Six articles with closest relevance to African American, middle class parents' meaning making ideology of achievement as resistance to racism shared with their offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms in middle class high schools are examined here. Although research is scarce, concerned scholars are now calling for research attention to African American parents of adolescent academic achievers. The social, cultural, and political strength of parent engagement that supports an ideology of resistance to racism through academic achievement, within this specific racial/ethnic group, warrants study.

Hayes (2012) argued that because researchers commonly group together all African American parents and students and compare them to White, middle class parents and students, this has led to a mostly skewed, one dimensional focus on African Americans that does not consider the impact of parent involvement across the various socioeconomic levels within the African American group (p. 568). Hayes (2011) and Howard and Reynolds (2008) found that most parental involvement literature has failed to consider not only the role of race but of social class when examining parent involvement and education, and that Black, middle class families have not been observed independently, suggesting incomplete findings.

The purpose of the Hayes (2012) study was an empirical examination of multidimensional constructions of parent involvement from parents' perspectives. His groundbreaking study was built on the findings of Paulson (1994) and Trusty (1998; 1999) whose research focused on a multidimensional construction of parent perceptions of involvement and achievement values that were home-based, school-based, and based

on parents' achievement values. Hayes (2012) articulated, however, that the findings of Paulson (1994) and Trusty (1998; 1999) could not be generalized to African Americans due to these studies' foci on White students and their parents. In addition to Hayes (2012) specifically focusing on African American families, his subjects came from different demographic backgrounds, and the parents of younger and older adolescent children were included. Important in this study was that Hayes (2012) used a purposive rather than a randomized sample of subjects. His subject sample was comprised of a deliberate selection of subjects. He specifically recruited parents from various educational and economic backgrounds in order to include the perspectives of African American parents and adolescents who were not all economically disadvantaged (Hayes, 2012, p. 570). Parents who took part were all volunteers, and surveys were used to gather data from them. Parents reported on home-based involvement, adolescents' grades, adolescents' school days missed, adolescents' discipline referrals, and family income and education. In this study, the items making up the achievement values allowed for parents to rate their attitudes about academic success on a five-point, Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (Hayes, 2012, p. 571).

Parents in the Hayes (2012) study who were engaged in higher levels of home-based involvement had adolescents who performed better academically and missed less school. Home-based parent involvement was the only predictor of achievement outcomes found in this study. Significant relations between adolescent achievement outcomes and school-based parent involvement were not found. Results of the study suggested involvement of White, middle class parents may be different from African American, middle class parents. Results of the study indicated that not all forms of

parent involvement lead to the same outcomes for all students (Hayes, 2012, p. 578). In addition, the sole finding distinguishing achievement outcomes in this study was parents' employment status. Family demographics had little impact on achievement outcomes of African Americans in this study. Hayes (2012) found that parents focused on home-based involvement positively impacted their adolescents' achievement regardless of economic background.

Limitations articulated by Hayes (2012) included relying on self-reported data of parents' perceived involvement levels with their children, as well as parents' reports on their adolescents' grades. Hayes (2012) called for empirical study in this area using larger samples of African American parents to impact reliability and validity. Strengths of the study included valuable knowledge gained about different positive parental behaviors in African American families and evidence of specific African American parent involvement behaviors, such as home-based involvement and adolescent achievement outcomes. Parents and school personnel must recognize the changing needs of adolescents from different backgrounds and fit parent involvement accordingly (Hayes, 2012, p. 580). Direct school involvement is important but is less impactful for parents of African American adolescents than parent involvement at home. The Hayes (2012) study is the closest to my research topic. Implications are that Black parents' meaning making observed through a racialized theoretical lens represents a noteworthy, positive shift in scholarly research on African American parents and adolescent academic achievement.

Cooper and Smalls (2010) posited that "virtually no studies have explored how racial and academic-specific socialization interact to influence adolescent outcomes" (p.

201), which compelled their research. Their innovative study examined how parents' academic and race-specific socialization may interact to contribute to the academic adjustment of African American adolescents, but from the perspectives of their children (Cooper & Smalls, 2010, p. 202). Although this study was from the students' perspective, it still has relevance to Black parent engagement. "Academic adjustment" was conceived as what students experienced through their parents' involvement and encouragement. Socialization had both cultural and academic dimensions. One hundred forty-four, African American middle school students were this study's participants. Participants were from two majority minority African American school districts and were from working and middle class backgrounds. Students who volunteered were surveyed with their parents' permission and pre-approval from both school districts. Students self-reported on their parents' promotion of cultural pride, parents' socialization conveying minority awareness of racism and discrimination, parents' educational encouragement, parents' engagement and involvement in students' academics, students' classroom engagement, students' academic self-esteem, students' academic-specific impression management, and students' self-reported grade averages. Each child's lunch status, free and reduced or not, was used as a proxy for determining SES. Significant findings of Cooper and Smalls (2010) included that parents' academic socialization was associated with more of the subjects' optimal academic adjustment, and these middle school adolescents reported that their parents' academic socialization was positively related to their academic competence and their engagement in the school setting (p. 208). They did call for research on African American parenting and how minority-experienced socialization is communicated to children (Cooper & Smalls, 2010, p. 209). Articulated

repeatedly was a call for research that will provide greater dimension about what African American parents' interactions with their adolescent offspring mean to their academic socialization. Implications include the necessity of scholars engaging in more study on African American parents of young and older adolescents and how culture affects socialization and academic achievement.

Munn-Joseph (2010) observed that the impact of African American parents on academic achievement had been ignored by scholars. She theorized that the emergence of hip hop culture, beginning in the 1970s has, however, helped empower some Black parents to respond to bias found in institutions like schools observed in the defense of the rights of their children to have quality education and independent cultural identity (Munn-Joseph, 2010, p. 218). Munn-Joseph (2010) characterized "hip hop" generation parents' message to the world as, "I am here, and you are going to have to begin to reckon with me on some level" (p. 219). What differentiates hip hop as a cultural tradition is its reliance on and appreciation for Black youth culture (Munn-Joseph, 2010, p. 219). This qualitative study's objective was to critically examine the strategies that Black parents, born between 1963 and 1973 and who identified with hip hop culture, negotiated and understood regarding racism and race relations as they struggled to support their children in school (Munn-Joseph, 2010, p. 219).

What emerged from subject interviews conducted by Munn-Joseph (2010) revealed that parents drew on their experiences and developed an ideology that nothing was beyond their power (p. 219). Munn-Joseph posited that these parents were transformed by hip hop ideology that helped them maintain dignity in a racially stratified society. Findings included parent responses focused on conversations with their children

about “accepting who you are and not letting the opinions of others determine how you express yourself” (Munn-Joseph, 2010, p. 220). One consistent theme stated by the Black parents in this study was the recognition that the larger society buys into the negative stereotype about Black students’ underperformance being attributed to genetic and family environment factors instead of school deficiencies and teacher prejudice (Munn-Joseph, 2010, p. 221). Subjects articulated that they were suspicious of White teachers but were also sometimes suspicious of Black teachers who might also be condescending of lower income Black students, and that they could also have low academic expectations of their children.

Munn-Joseph (2010) also found that hip hop generation parents enjoyed sharing traditions of Black cultural expression with others as a way of transforming how Black experiences are interpreted by the larger society. Implications of this study include a call for additional research on African American, hip hop parents’ criticality of systems of power, their transformative behaviors enacted on behalf of their offspring, and the impact of their ideology on their adolescents’ academic achievement.

Lindsay (2011) observed that different academic achievement was still observed “between Black and White adolescents in similar middle class families” (p. 761). An achievement gap persisted at all levels of family SES between Black and White students, which was puzzling (Lindsay, 2011, p. 762). She analyzed three specific domains that shape and influence experiences that parents can provide for their children, and that impact adolescent achievement: parenting styles, neighborhoods, and use of time. The purpose of her study was to understand whether controlling for these three “local ecology” (Lindsay, 2011, p. 762) context domains would lessen black-white test score

differences. She used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems approach that different contexts significantly impact adolescent outcomes (Lindsay, 2011, p. 779). Lindsay (2011) posited that if there were differences between the contexts faced by White and Black, middle class families there might be differences in parenting strategies (p. 762). Lindsay cited Lareau's (2003) study as significant to understanding student achievement levels must not only consider race or class but the interaction between the two (Lindsay, 2011, p. 765). A national sample of 20,000 adolescents in middle school and high school was used by Lindsay (2011).

Although Lindsay (2011) hypothesized that controlling for the three local ecology domains would eliminate Black-White differences in achievement, striking differences actually emerged in the three contexts between the Black and White, middle class families in this study. Black and White families differed on key elements that are essential to understanding enduring racial achievement gaps that persist in all SES levels (Lindsay, 2011, p. 778). She found that Black, middle class families experienced different stressors and that more investigation of the impact of race and social class is needed to better understand differences in educational outcomes.

Harper (2010) examined the self-belief perceptions and academic motivations of African American adolescents and their academic achievement in accelerated, Honors programs compared to White students (p. 474). Although this study did not include an examination of the self-perceptions of the parents of the subjects regarding academic achievement, the relationship of this study to my research is its focus on high academic achievement of African American accelerated, high school students. This study helped generate interest in future study of the parents of said academically high achieving

African American students. Harper's (2010) discussion of findings also has very significant implications regarding cultural sensitivity and competency in the interpretation of research regarding African American academic achievers.

Harper (2010) defined self-regulated learning and achievement as the expression of specific thoughts and behaviors that ensure academic success achieved through time management, persistence, and task-specific goal setting (pp. 473-474). Harper (2010) posited that Zimmerman's (2000) theory regarding the interaction of personal, behavioral, and environmental processes is crucial to successfully executing self-regulating strategies. Fueling Harper's (2010) study were: (a) three decades of literature across disciplines on Black students' academic underperformance compared to White students' performance and (b) the absence of research on the academic motivations of high achieving African American students compared to high achieving White students. Harper's (2010) empirical study was a comparison of Honors-level high school students' achievement perspectives in Black and White. He focused on two distinct high achievement self-motivation orientations—a fixed-view or malleable view orientation (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, & Lin, 1998) regarding their academic self beliefs (Harper, 2010, p. 477). The 257 Black and White study participants attended three predominantly African American, urban, Midwestern schools (Harper, 2010, p. 477). Data gleaned from questionnaires were consistent that these high achieving students differed in the way that they perceived their own potential for intellectual growth. Harper (2010) observed in the data that "White Honors students more strongly held to the notion that intelligence is a malleable quality rather than a fixed trait than did Black Honors students" (pp. 480-481). Harper advised more research in this area. He concurred with Dweck (2000) that for

African American students, protecting one's academic self-concept may be due to a heightened level of personal anxiety due to stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is broadly defined as the self-perceptions that one's actions are continuously scrutinized by the dominant society through a stereotypically negative lens of race (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Harper (2010) seemed to suggest that stereotype threat may be at work in negatively impacting even the achievement perspectives of high achieving African American students, despite their earning high test scores and grades. What is important here is that although Harper (2010) did not directly articulate the need for culturally competent acuity in research related to African American families and academic achievement, his sensitive discussions of the findings in his study are reflective of it.

Carter's (2008a) qualitative research study, first discussed in Chapter 1, focused on high achieving Black students rather than on their parents, yet the participants clearly articulated their parents' influence on their academic experiences in the data captured. "By conceptualizing success in the context of being a proud member of the Black community an achievement ethos is developed that reflects an understanding of success despite systemic forces that oppress Black people in society" (Carter, 2008a, p. 471). Rachel, Kimmy, Rodney, and Derek—pseudonyms for several of the African American, middle class subjects in this study—credited their parents with emphasizing that they were likewise Black and smart. These adolescents "do not operate from a deficit mentality about Black intellectual capacity; instead they see achievement as intrinsic to who they are as racial beings" (Carter, 2008a, p. 482). Students in the study also articulated an understanding that cultivating different types of cultural capital in White education environments, such as making friends with students from a variety of

backgrounds and creating social networks, is integral to school success and that their parents encouraged this behavior.

Carter's (2008a) findings connect to this qualitative study on African American, middle class parents. The participants' narratives in Carter's (2008a) study regarding the ties, the connections, the links, the conversations, and the support that their parents and other Black adult family members and associates consistently exchanged with them about race and academic achievement help to justify this study about parental influence, race, and academic achievement. Carter's (2008a) participants perceived themselves to be constantly under attack in predominantly White, middle class learning environments "in which their racial group membership is often associated with anti-intellectualism and/or intellectual inferiority" (p. 478). They also clearly discussed, however, that their psyches were supported by parents who encouraged strong racial self-concepts for survival and academic achievement.

CRAI, which guided Carter's (2008a) research in this understudied area, is purposefully, intentionally, and positively focused on African American adolescent meaning perspectives regarding high achievement that are racism resistant. Carter's (2008a) findings and theoretical framework have implications for expanding the use of CRAI, CRT, transformative learning theory, and achievement theory to help understand the impact of African American, middle class parents' sharing of critically transformative meaning perspectives with their high achieving adolescents regarding academic achievement that are racism resistant.

### **Parenting and Homeplace**

Academic achievement for some African American people is as an act of resistance to racism. I argue here that an empowered, racism-resistant perspective of achievement is shared by African American parents with their adolescent achievers. Parents are the first teachers of their children. Family engagement is rooted in patterns of behaviors and interactions that take place in the home (Lacy 2007; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Conley, 2008), or the homeplace. As initially mentioned in Chapter 1, hooks (1990) described *homeplace* (pp. 41-42) as the Black family's historic haven where caring, nurturing, recharging, healing, and protecting occur, and that also have served as places of refuge, buffering, and protection from racialized hatred, oppression, and domination. Home, for some, is a place of political resistance, critical consciousness, liberation, and escape from psychological aggression (hooks, 1990). The home has long been a "crucial site for organizing and for forming political solidarity" (p. 47) in the Black liberation struggle. Black, middle class parents' racism resistant meaning perspectives that value, nurture, and raise the critical consciousness of Black adolescents while integrating social mechanisms that help nurture, protect, and compel their high achievement in what may be racially challenging schooling environments bear examination. It is in researching the relationships of Black, middle class parents and their adolescent high achievers that scholars may come to better understand, encourage, and potentially refocus research on what Black parents of highly successful students are doing to support high quality educational experiences and outcomes regarding their adolescents.

Black people, over a lifetime, must develop strategies to try to manage and mitigate racial stigmatization in public spheres (Lacy, 2007). The experiences of middle

and upper Black, middle class adults are refracted through an inescapable filter inclusive of skin color as well as social class. The dominant culture community may be less aware of the depth of African American within-group diversity, but Black people are aware. The pain of rejection based on race in America continues today, as well as the real impact of racism on quality of life, and this is inclusive of Black, middle class people (Cose, 1993). African Americans' collective critique of the uneven hand of American privilege and power is nothing new (Cohen & Dawson, 1993). Thus, do some parents equip their adolescents with a racialized cultural capital that helps to foster a critically transformative perspective of personal empowerment that operates not only as a buffer that resists racism but is used as a catalyst for high achievement in racially challenging environments?

### **Transformative Learning Theory and Skin Color Privilege**

Using transformative learning theory to examine African American, middle class parents' meaning making perspectives inclusive of an achievement ideology can help to generate a greater understanding of racialized meaning perspectives that support adolescent achievement. My study is focused on understanding the complexities of African American, middle class parents' critically transforming frames of reference exchanged with their adolescents regarding race and social class that support academic achievement. Family narratives and stories passed down from one generation to the next regarding race and its politics are instrumental behaviors that historically disenfranchised groups have engaged in to develop a race consciousness that is resistant to dominant, American, societal subjugation (Johnson-Bailey, 2010). And middle class parents, both Black and White, deliberately engage in transmitting social cultural advantages to their

offspring that stimulate and cultivate their development as they grow (Lareau, 2002, pp. 772-773). With this in mind, this study investigated Black, middle class parents' transmission of racialized, social cultural capital to their adolescents supportive of above average achievement and racism resistance in AP and Gifted Education classrooms where racial challenges can be issues. A qualitative examination of racialized cultural capital shared by Black, middle class adult parents with their adolescent offspring was conducted. As discussed in Chapter 1, the sharing of social cultural capital occurs from one generation to the next, and some types of social cultural capital are more compatible with institutions like schools.

The transforming of relationships, which can impact power and control, is a significant adult learning process. Adults reflect upon their experiences, which can lead to critical changes in perceptions and behaviors (Brookfield, 2005). Central to adult learning theory is transformative learning through critical reflection. And critical theory has impacted transformative learning theory from its inception. It has had bearing on it to include the social justice concept of critical reflection to emancipate adults from the constraints of dysfunctional, hegemonic beliefs. Examining hegemonic assumptions is integral to defining critical reflection which turns critical reflection into a political concept (Brookfield, 2000, p. 125). To be critically reflective is not simply being reflective. Being critically reflective involves engaging in a power analysis of a situation that is essentially destroying an individual's sense of well-being, and changing it (Brookfield, 2000). Johnson-Bailey & Alfred (2006) investigated critically transformative learning in adult education teaching practice. Johnson-Bailey & Alfred (2006) explored the significance of critical reflection in supporting teaching practice and

transformative learning in adulthood. In this study, she and several close African American, female colleagues discovered striking similarities in their teaching practices used to compel transformative social change and awareness in their adult students. Their awareness that none had articulated that they used transformative learning in their years of scholarly writing at that time was highly revelatory (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006, p. 51). I believe that African American, middle class, adult parents of high achievers may similarly integrate critically transformative learning strategy into distinctive cultural capital that they share with and teach their adolescents. Cultural capital that is powerful and transforming can help adolescents operate successfully in AP and Gifted classrooms, which can be sites of racial challenge and oppression, and where they are often in the minority. I believe that Black, middle class parents share critically transformative achievement ideology with their offspring that helps to support high achievement in high school. Parents' racial socialization of their adolescent children, and the impact of race on adolescents' schooling and high achievement experiences, is an understudied area in research. Decades of research focused on academic deficit outcomes of minorities have found that a persistent and appalling achievement gap exists between White and Black students, by race.

As important as it is to understand hegemonic oppression of marginalized persons or groups and education outcomes and experiences, and utilizing critically reflective, transformative learning to bring about change, so is research investigation that examines the complexities of power and privilege, and the social constructions of the advantaged racial majority that research has shown is passed from one generation to the next. With greater understanding of the strategies utilized by holders of power and privilege,

strategies for empowerment that can help even the playing field for those who have been historically excluded may be revealed. In the last decade just a handful of articles have emerged on research focused on the meaning of Whiteness and White skin color in relationship to racial socialization, social class, family engagement, and education, and the sustaining of systemic White power and privilege over generations.

Only one study was located that specifically focused on the impact of parents' racial socialization on their adolescents, and the impact of race on the adolescents' schooling experience. Grossman and Charmaraman (2009) focused on the importance of race in the lives of White adolescents, their parents' impact on their White racial/ethnic identities, and adolescents' educational experiences regarding White social identity and schooling. A different study, this one by Bodavski and Farkas (2010), also examined the impact of White parents' socialization on their children however the children are of elementary school age. Bodavski and Farkas (2010) sought to quantitatively test Lareau's (2003) qualitative theory of parental concerted cultivation of middle class children and observed, like Lareau (2003), that middle class parents' social capital shared with their children had a positive effect on school achievement (pp. 3-7). Lareau's (2003) qualitative research on cultural capital, also discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, found the strongest compatibility between middle class social cultural capital and institutions such as schools. Bodavski and Farkas (2010) found that White parents' class status was positively and significantly associated with White children's high achievement, and their findings strongly supported Lareau's (2003) model in which social class and concerted cultivation accompanied high parental expectations and outcomes. Research on the meaning of Whiteness that illustrates White privilege

transferred generationally from parent to child and utilized to bring about achievement in educational environments provides a rationalization for opening the door to examining meaning making by adult parents of color transferred to their children, and the ramifications of family socialization in Black, middle class families that helps their children not only persevere but academically achieve in what can be racially challenging places, such as schools.

### **White Privilege and Family-Relevant Research**

Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, and Freeman (2010) reported on several emerging conceptual trends in research, including family-relevant research. These conceptual trends appeared to be an outgrowth of socialization research focused on identifying and analyzing the meaning of Whiteness, and White privilege. They called for additional research using a wider variety of study participants and racially sensitive research questions, and the articulation in findings of potential research bias due to interpretations of the data collected by researchers based on their own White cultural meaning making. Considering the ways in which social construction shapes everyone, including White researchers, who not only collect qualitative but quantitative data, has only recently begun to be recognized as an important issue with regard to research trustworthiness. More White researchers are compelling themselves, or are being compelled, to critically reflect on and discuss how Whiteness may influence their findings in respect to their perceptions about participants from different backgrounds than their own, as well as in their reading and reporting of data (Burton et al., 2010). Researchers' perceptions and meaning making can have far-reaching consequences for research to come (Burton et al., 2010, p. 445).

Privilege and power transformed, transmitted, and sustained across generations in White families has been critically studied and interrogated (Bodavski & Farkas, 2010; Grossman & Charmaraman, 2009; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Discourse on the meaning of Whiteness has begun to dismantle the long-standing fallacy that only people of color have race or ethnicity or culture and this has also opened the door for questions to be asked about how race is experienced, processed, and transmitted in White families (Burton et al., 2010). Research on Whiteness, skin color privilege, meaning making, and social capital transfer among families also supports investigation of African American, middle class families' meaning making, race, and social capital transfer among families.

Grossman and Charmaraman (2009) found relationships between White adolescents' racial-ethnic identity and a relationship between parents' socialization of their adolescents and schooling experience. The goal of this mixed-methods study was to examine White adolescents' explanations of the importance of race in their lives and their reports on the importance of parental influence and school experience on transforming their racial-ethnic centrality. Themes included positive regard, internal and external self-pride, awareness of racial inequity, and awareness of their White privilege. The most common finding in this study was that "my race does not define me" (Grossman & Charmaraman, 2009, p. 7). The theme of positive racial self-regard represented the second highest common response. These researchers also found, however, wide diversity of difference in meaning making and White privilege among White families, particularly when White parents' education levels and incomes varied. The higher the education and socioeconomic level of White parents, the lower the emphasis on race by parents as an aspect of importance in the identities of their adolescents. Grossman and Charmaraman

(2009) suspected that the greater the White presence was in schools, the less concern was expressed and emphasized about race by White parents. Depending upon a school's racial demographics, in this study, White adolescents reported the impact of race in their lives as being less significant if they were in the majority. More racial pride was outwardly exhibited by the White students at schools where Whites were the minority. Grossman and Charmaraman (2009) called for additional research on interactions between social class privilege and White skin color privilege, racial identity, parent engagement, and schooling experience.

Intergenerational transmission of social class status entails understanding how a child's parents provide him or her with experiences and resources that affect the child's opportunities and choices (Bodavski & Farkas, 2010, p. 903). As previously stated, Bodavski and Farkas (2010) found that White parental SES is positively and very strongly associated with middle class concerted cultivation, and concerted cultivation is positively associated with higher test scores and teachers' positive judgment of student language and literacy skills (Bodavski & Farkas, 2010, p. 903). Bodavski and Farkas' (2010) research purposefully restricted study participants, and only White, non-Hispanic families and students were included. They fully acknowledged that this quantitative study reduced uncertainties and misrepresentations by restricting attention to Whites only because residential segregation, cultural differences, and racial prejudice might not capture Black/White racial differences in the consequences of concerted cultivation (Bodavski & Farkas, 2010, p. 904). However, Lareau's (2003) qualitative study included African American, middle class parents and children. She found that Black, middle class parents also exhibit concerted cultivation characteristics and that

Black, middle class children benefitted from middle class social class advantage. What Lareau's (2003) comprehensive qualitative research did not include, however, was the impact of socialization on the test scores and outcomes of middle class students, as did the Bodavski and Farkas (2010) study. The Bodavski and Farkas (2010) study clearly makes an argument for further investigation inclusive of racialized transformative meaning making by economically advantaged African American adult parents of high academic achieving adolescents. Is there racialized, middle class, concerted cultivation specific to an African American achievement ideology transferred by parents to adolescents that supports academic achievement as a form of resistance to racism in schooling experience?

Twine and Gallagher (2008) found in their review of literature on White privilege and White identity that a body of scholarly research that emerged in the 1990s and permeated almost "every branch of the social sciences" was significant to understanding White cultural advantage (p. 6). They also discussed a second wave of research on White privilege that extended the findings of the first but did not delve into meaning making and identity shared in families. Twine and Gallagher (2008) posited that research on transformative learning and sharing of White identity is long overdue. Their research informs scholarship that Whiteness is deeply embedded in the routine structures of economic and political life (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 19). White skin advantages and privileges those with it. Research is needed that addresses the familial impact of White skin color from one generation to the next. Empirical research on White privilege is needed that helps to dismantle racial hierarchies so there is a world where ethnic minority

parents do not have to explain to their children what racism is, or White supremacy, or have to teach their children to guard against it (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, pp. 20-21).

### **African American, Middle Class and Family-Relevant Research**

As discussed, the meaning of Whiteness and White privilege have become of increasing scholarly interest over the last decade by researchers who want to understand meaning making, culture, and Whiteness. Conversely, exploring distinctions in meaning making and Blackness, or other groups' "race effects" (Burton et al., 2010), such as social class other than Whites, and inclusive of an examination of socially constructed meaning making, are concepts conspicuously absent from scholarship. Study of the social constructions of families of color, and understanding meaning making perspectives within and across racial/ethnic minority groups regarding educational experience, and other experiences, has been called for by vocal Black scholars, however (Delgado & Stefancic 2001; Perry et al., 2003). Yet, a body of research on the impact of wealth, families of color, and schooling experience has not been integrated into the scholarly literature. My research is new that investigates achievement ideology that is racism resistant that African American, middle class parents share with their high achieving adolescents in integrated AP and Gifted Education classrooms where they are often in the minority. The impact of parental influence and engagement on educational outcomes of academically high achieving African American adolescents from economically advantaged backgrounds like Whites has not been studied. In other words, family researchers have not significantly considered the ways that race, economic advantage and social class within a racial group may impact findings.

Also discussed in Chapter 1, CRT is a way of thinking and being that must be taught as a distinct paradigm promoting a structural approach to addressing the problems of a diverse society (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). CRT assumes that race is a social construction determined by the dominant group to promote and protect its interests by separating and stratifying people below the dominant group (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, pp. 177-178). And institutions, like schools, are socially constructed mechanisms that regulate and set norms for social interaction (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 180). Racial assumptions become a part of the development of the psyche for members of all groups and “facts” [quotation marks in original text] become a part of the conscious and unconscious (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 181). The CRT paradigm reflects a commitment to the pursuit of social justice for those encountering oppression, and CRT practice endeavors to change structures that are the source of the original problem (Ortiz & Jani, 2010, p. 183).

Few (2007) used CRT to argue the advantages and challenges of observing, through a critical race feminist lens, the lives of Black adult women and their families. Although this study focused on adult women who were parents, it still has relevance to my pending study, which is not gender specific. Few (2007) discussed using multiethnic and critical race theories in family studies in order to give Black women authoritative voice about their experiences and to learn how they come to understand themselves (pp. 453-454). A family scholar, Few (2007) argued that to adequately address how Black women negotiate interlocking social locations that impact the family, a Black consciousness must be integrated into family studies (p. 454). Theoretically centering Black experience brings authenticity to understanding how individuals and groups negotiate the politics and complexities of interlocking institutional oppressions (Few,

2007, p. 459). Few (2007) called for the integration of a Black consciousness into family studies that supports “a social justice agenda,” and this is compatible with the research intent of my study (p. 470).

Mildred and Zuniga (2004) discussed issues faced by students of color in academically competitive classes where they were the minority. This study, although focused on students, has relevance to mine due to its focus on racism experienced in academically rigorous and competitive classrooms. Students in this study expressed that racist and/or classist remarks were overtly or covertly made in classrooms, wittingly or unwittingly by faculty and/or students, and that biased social and interpersonal dimensions in classrooms bring about unresolved emotional issues that impact the learning of students’ of color (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004, pp. 1-3) . Mildred and Zuniga (2004) called for investigation of social justice issues in school settings, and the inclusion of voices of Black people who have been historically silenced and/or pathologized regarding race and education. African American, middle class parents’ meaning making perspectives on academic achievement used as tools to resist racism can inform us about the dichotomy of economic privilege on one hand, and continuing racial oppression and discrimination on the other, regarding economically advantaged Blacks and the ongoing academic achievement gap.

Racial socialization by African American parents of their children is still today, to a large degree, the “road less traveled” (Burton et al., 2010, p. 441) in research. But, it appears to be slowly receiving some attention due to “shifts in the American population’s color lines, and by prominent scholarly and political discourses on critical race theories and colorism” (Burton et al., 2010, p. 441). “Colorism” is the allocation of privilege

according to lightness or darkness of skin color (Burke, 2008, p. 17). Within the framework of racism, colorism can further marginalize people within racial groups. Although also not the focus of my study, research on this challenging within-race topic can potentially advance scholarly understanding of what is acknowledged as the very complex task of addressing other distinguishing racial experiences of African American adults and their children. How colorism resonates in respect to this study is the recognition that just one study, my study, cannot be expected to cover every aspect of African American, middle class parent engagement, race, and adolescent academic achievement, and more research is indicated. Qualitative research needs to emerge that examines the myriad complexities involved in ethnic minority, middle class parents' engagement with their adolescents, academic achievement, and race.

### **Chapter Summary**

There are reasons to believe that whole swaths of social life associated with social class are missing from research (Lareau & Conley, 2008), as previously mentioned in this chapter. Although none of the six closest studies located for this review specifically addressed my study's research topic, they do reflect a growing interest in understanding more about African American, middle class parents' social cultural capital and academic achievement meaning perspectives different from White, middle class parents. In addition, the six studies reviewed help to emphasize the gap that exists in scholarly research on within-race difference in the parenting of African American adolescent academic achievers, inclusive of parenting styles and social class advantage.

In addition, none of these studies discussed or directly articulated a connection between White skin color privilege and above average academic achievement among

gifted and talented White adolescents. Unlike what Carter (2008) explored in her groundbreaking study identifying a CRAI among a group of high achieving Black students in a gifted program in a predominantly White middle class school, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this study, these six studies focused principally on social capital transfer, i.e., self-identity, racial pride and positive self-regard.

As also discussed, scholars have not paid sufficient attention to studying variations among Black parents of different social classes and how they socialize themselves and their children. Scholars have devoted a lot of attention on the perceived burden of Blackness and they have skipped opportunities to try and understand that there are things that are enjoyable about being Black (Lacy, 2007, p. 17). As mentioned, in order to understand what it means to be a Black, middle class person, detailed analyses of Black people who do not live in or near blighted neighborhoods must also be studied (Lacy, 2007, p. 22). Capturing the strategies and work involved for Black, middle class parents to cultivate racial pride in their children, activate middle class social advantage for themselves and their children, and enact an ideology of high academic achievement that thwarts racism, are social, political, and cultural behaviors that have as yet not been thoroughly examined in scholarly research.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Design of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Overwhelming research evidence shows that pessimism, i.e. low expectations, has gone hand in hand with exclusion and underperformance by Blacks in Gifted and Talented Education for decades (Whiting & Ford, 2009, p. 23). Black, middle class parents of adolescent, above average, academic achievers resist, weather, and stand outside of the abundant research on race, parent engagement, and underachievement; they too warrant research understanding and inclusion in investigating and informing the academic achievement gap.

Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?
3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

This chapter covers the rationale and relevance of using qualitative research methods and the appropriateness of the person-to-person interview as the primary means of data collection through narrative inquiry used in this study. Procedures for sample selection, data collection, participation consent, security of data, and data analysis are also explained. Reflexivity, challenges to research design, and a chapter summary are also discussed.

### **Qualitative Inquiry**

The purpose of qualitative research inquiry is to observe the complexities of the social interactions of people through the meanings that they attribute to their interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). Qualitative research is “pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). “In a qualitative study the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data,” and investigators maximize opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information (Merriam, 1998, p. 20). Merriam (1998) describes the role of the qualitative research investigator as being like a detective, patiently searching for clues and leads in pursuit of missing pieces to a puzzle (p. 21). Important characteristics of qualitative investigators include sensitivity to all phases of data collection, good communication and listening skills, and establishing empathy and rapport with study participants (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative methods of inquiry were most appropriate for this study. Qualitative inquiry that is racialized critically focuses research investigation on the collective reclamation and rescue of Black life from distortions of racist ideology (Brookfield, 2003; Outlaw, 1996). A racialized perspective or lens focuses on a group’s positionality

positively viewed through a distinctive racial group's experiences in the world (Brookfield, 2003; Outlaw, 1996). "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). Black, middle class, adult parents' socially constructed realities, and situational constraints, concerning academic achievement and race shared with their adolescents, have not been studied. A racialized lens is refocused through the particularities of African American experience that reveal interests and values (Brookfield, 2003, p. 158). Scholars have not paid attention to Black, middle class parents' ideologies in socializing their children's identities (Lacy, 2007, p. 7).

### **Interview Methods**

Interviewing is defined as "a common means of collecting qualitative data" and the "most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another" (Merriam, 1998, p. 71). There are different types of interview structures that are used in interview data collection methods. "At one end of the continuum fall highly structured, questionnaire-driven interviews; at the other end are unstructured, open-ended, conversational formats" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). For the purposes of this study, the semi-structured interview was utilized, and questions were open-ended. "Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). The semi-structured interview is guided for the most part by "a list of questions or issues to be explored and neither the exact wording, nor the order of questions, is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

This format allows the investigator to respond and follow-up on “the emerging worldview of the respondent and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

The primary objective of the interview is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants’ own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Capturing the deep meaning of participants’ experiences in their own words was relevant, necessary, and integral to this qualitative study in order to collect rich, revealing, and authentic data. The voices of participants carry the story through a dialogue of their experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 43).

A modified version of Seidman’s (2013) “three-interview series” (p. 20) data gathering method was used in this study, and is discussed in detail in the next section. Seidman’s (2013) interviewing process is the strategy used in this study to gather rich, meaningful and useful data from parent participants. In qualitative research the in-depth, person-to-person, interview can be the overall method employed (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 142). One of the most important aspects of the interviewer’s approach is conveying the attitude that each participant’s views are valuable and useful (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 145).

### **Research Design**

In qualitative research one must ask questions such as, “Do we believe the claims that a researcher puts forward?” and, “On what grounds do we judge these as credible?” and, “Are the claims potentially useful for the problem we are concerned with?” posit Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 40). And is the examination of questions viewed through racialized cultural contexts impactful to trustworthiness? External validity is the extent to which the results of the research study are generalizable (Lodico, Spalding, & Voegtle,

2010, p. 29). This study is not generalizable. The parent participants were a very small group, within a small group, whose adolescents attended just one public high school. In addition, the study of African American, middle class parents' CRAI and its impact on academically high achieving adolescents in AP and Gifted Education classrooms has not been conducted elsewhere.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Research Design**

When this study was conducted there was not another like it to compare it to. Understandings gained from this study are the first on this topic. In addition, no single qualitative study can address every issue emanating from its data. Scholars will search for weaknesses in this study. There are weaknesses in this study, and every study. Literature on the cultural capital of Black, middle class adult parents is scant however, as is literature about Black, middle class parent engagement and high academic achievement by their children. This study is an effort to encourage others to generate research in this area. Black, middle class parents likely utilize cultural capital in different ways to negotiate educational systems with their children (Lacy, 2007). More research than this single study is needed to develop a complex, multidimensional, and richly descriptive picture of the strengths and weaknesses of a strength-based approach to studying African American parents' regarding their impact on adolescent, above average, academic achievement in AP and Gifted Education classrooms in high school.

### **The Three-Interview Series Method**

Seidman's (2013) three-interview series strategy is a data gathering process that helps explore the meaning of people's experiences within the context of their lives (p. 20). A qualitative interview structure that allows participants to reconstruct and also

reflect upon their experiences aptly characterizes this method. This interview method can help participants frame and explore the context of their experiences while also encouraging deep reflection. As mentioned, a modified version of Seidman's (2013) interview method was employed in this study. Seidman (2013) states that, "...alterations to the three-interview structure, and duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored" (p. 25). Due to time constraints voiced by the parents, each couple was interviewed twice, instead of three times. In addition, the couples asked whether both interviews could be done on the same day as the first interview. Interviews with the three couples were conducted on separate dates. None of the couples met or interacted with the other couples interviewed. Interviews with the spouses were conducted together. Two single parents who also voluntarily completed the online questionnaire and met the study's participation criteria were included and then interviewed. Each interview session ranged from one hour, to a maximum of 90 minutes in length. Seidman (2013) suggests spacing the first and second interviews from 3 days to one week apart (p.24). Seidman (2013) also indicated that close proximity of the second interview to the first allows participants to "mull over the preceding interview, but not enough time to lose the connection between the two" (p. 24). I used Seidman's (2013) interview timeline as a guide, but each couple specifically requested completing both interviews with me on the same day due to their limited availability to meet together a second time on a different day due to their heavy work schedules. I accommodated their requests to do the two interviews back-to-back. There was a thirty minute to one hour break per couple between each interview.

## **The Interview Guide**

The interview guide, or interview schedule, is a list of questions that the interviewer intends to ask during an interview (Merriam, 1998). Working from an interview guide allows the researcher to gain experience in conducting open-ended questioning that can help yield meaningful responses. A study's objectives determine the content of the interview guide (p. 82).

Participants were provided with some information in advance about this study's topic. Those who voluntarily elected to complete the online questionnaire (see Appendix A) also received information that helped to lay the groundwork in preparation for participation in the study; the researcher asked questions during the face-to-face interviews from the interview guides to elicit data, descriptive responses from participants, during the two interviews. An interview guide helps the interviewer to organize and then ask good questions to gather rich information from participants.

The first interview establishes the contexts of the adult participants' own experiences (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). In this study, participants first described their own experiences with achievement and race as adolescents in their profiles. The second interview involved the study participants' reconstruction of details about what they communicated as parents to their adolescents regarding race, social class, and high achievement. In the first interview participants were asked to put their experiences in context by talking about conversations they recalled having with their parents about race and academic achievement when they were teenagers. By asking "how" conversations happen the interviewer is looking for the narration of events to explore context (p. 21). In the second interview, the focus was on understanding participants' present lives, and

what they shared about race, social class, and academic achievement with their teenagers. Details about participants' experiences are asked, upon which their opinions about the topic may be built (p. 21). In this study's second interview, parents were asked to reflect upon the consequences and results that enacting a racism-resistant, high achievement ideology had on their adolescents.

### **The Person-to-Person Interview**

Person-to-person interviews, modified to interview couples, were conducted. Parents were asked open-ended questions from the interview guides (see Appendices B and C). How questions are worded is a "crucial consideration in extracting the type of information desired" (Merriam, 1998, p. 76.). I hypothesized that critical themes and categories would emerge from coding, and that I would report on them in the critical analysis of the data collected. Interviews have benefits in yielding lots of information quickly, and immediate follow up and clarification are also possible. Interviews can also have limitations or pose problems, however. Participants can become unwilling or uncomfortable sharing all that the researcher wants to explore (Creswell, 2007, p. 140). And, transcribing, sorting, and organizing interview information can be daunting and challenging for the researcher (p. 140). Thoughtful interviewing depends on building trust between the interviewee and the researcher and sensitivity towards interviewees' responses to the questions posed. Interview data gathered must demonstrate that the participants' perspectives and views relative to the purpose of the study are uncovered. High quality, rich data can be obtained through careful interviewing. Selecting a good, appropriate sample of participants is a major step in qualitative research when considering who could and should be interviewed.

### **Narrative Inquiry as Methodology**

Narrative inquiry focuses on how individuals experience the world and the stories that result from those experiences (Holley & Colyar, 2009). Basic elements of a narrative involve the telling, or retelling, of a story by a range of characters, mediated through their actions, points of view, and the organization of the text (p. 681). The researcher is the storyteller, the participants are characters, “and the plot orders the reader’s comprehension of significant events” (p.681). The qualitative interview was the primary tool used in this study for gathering participants’ narratives. When individuals narrate their experiences, they use plot, story, character, and perspective (p. 684). Participants’ experiences and stories are woven throughout, and are viewed through the lens of CRAI.

### **Sample Selection**

The purposeful sampling method (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002) of recruiting participants was used in this study. A purposeful sample is one that the researcher selects based on specific selection criteria to “discover, understand and gain insight [about] a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). With the use of a purposeful sample, also referred to as a criterion-based sample (Merriam, 1998, p. 61), the researcher creates a list of distinguishing sample features that “directly reflect the purpose of the study and help guide the investigator in the identification of information-rich” research (Merriam, 1998, pp. 61-62). A stratified, purposeful sample is defined as being illustrative of a specific subgroup within a group, and it facilitates the identification of data gathered about the particular subgroup (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 107), specifically African American, middle class parents of academically high performing adolescents in AP and gifted.

Permission to access a group of Black parents who were potential study participants was given to me by the principal of Zenith High School (the school name has been changed). A purposeful, criterion-based sample was thus utilized in this study (Merriam, 1998). Purposeful sampling includes participants selected by researchers from which the most can be discovered about what is being studied. "Saturation" is defined as the point from which no new information can be observed using the purposeful sample data (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Saturation, in respect to identifying a purposeful sample for this study, occurred at the point when the total number of potential study participants from the school was ascertained who met this study's participation criteria. Saturation, in respect to the data collected from this study's participants, occurred when themes and category patterns repeated and no new information was revealed. The methods of collecting data from the purposeful sample will be discussed later. The decision to use parents whose high achieving adolescents were in the gifted program, taking AP courses, or both, and all attended Zenith High School, was one of access. This is also sometimes referred to as a convenience sample. A convenience sample is the selection of a "sample based on time, money, location, or availability of sites or respondents" (Merriam, 1998, p. 63). This middle class high school located in a southeastern public school system, offers an array of AP courses. In addition, the school is in a school system that has a state supported and federally funded Gifted Education program K-12. Gifted education is available in this school system to students who are tested and meet program requirements from grades K-12. Students qualify for the Gifted Education program based on a process inclusive of test scores, course grades, and teacher, counselor, and administrator recommendation. Utilizing participants who are

available and accessible for research is done “to ensure full responses to the research questions...and to maximize opportunities for gathering data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 117).

Couples were each interviewed by the researcher. As previously mentioned in this chapter, two single Black parents of Black, adolescent academic achievers identified through the data query also responded to the letter of introduction to the study, fit the study’s criteria, and were also interviewed. Both parents were mothers. A family is described as a group of two people or more, one of whom is the householder, related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together or, a lone parent of any marital status with at least one child living in the same dwelling; children are the sons and daughters, including stepchildren and adopted children, of the householder (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Changing conceptualizations of families and parents is needed in scholarly research to be inclusive of increasing family diversity across all groups. Many Black children live in non-traditional families (Evans-Winters, 2011, p. 41), and this includes single parent led households, hence their inclusion in this study. Adults in the home who may also function in a primary parenting role, and who may have an impact on adolescent achievement include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and older adult siblings.

### **Justification of Participation Criteria**

The parents who participated in this study were identified through a purposeful, criterion-based, sample selection process. Parents participating in this study, self-identified, and also identified their adolescent offspring as, African American, Black American, or Black. Parents also met specific participation criteria delineated in this

section that correspond with a desirable convenience sample for this intentionally strength-based study on Black, middle class parents (see Table 1).

Participants had to be the parent of a Black, adolescent attending Zenith high school. The student had to have maintained an above-average grade point average in gifted education courses, or be an above average student in an AP class, and completed said course or class and also passed the corresponding national AP exam with a score of 3-5 (see Table 2).

Justification for this study's criteria is the intentional focus on the ideological perspectives of Black, middle class parents of clearly established, academically high achieving, Black adolescent high school students in AP and Gifted Education classes. Study participation by Black, middle class parents of Black adolescent achievers who have already mastered both rigorous coursework and arguably, academically competitive schooling environments, eliminates conjecture about Black intellectual and social capacity to academically achieve in this study. The Black, middle class parents in this study have academically exceptional children (see Table 2). Yet, AP and Gifted Education classrooms in public high schools are where most Black, middle class students, as well as the majority of Black students from every social class, are the least represented nationally.

Another study requirement mentioned previously, was that at least one adult participant in each family self-identified as having some college experience. A bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university was most desirable. One of the indicators of a child going on to earn a college degree is a parent with a college degree (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Spera et al., 2007). College-educated parents are likely to

Table 1

*Parent Data*

Parents' names	Ages	Years married	Family Income	Education	Occupation
Adam & Athena Anderson	50/53	26	\$50,000- 69,000	1 Assoc. & 1 Bachelor's	Sound Tech & Chef
Chad & Claire Clarke	45/45	21	\$90,000+	2 Bachelor's degrees	Engineer & Teacher
Draco & Diana Diamond	48/ 46	23	\$90,000+	2 Bachelor's degrees	Consultant & Clerk
Giselle Gavin	46	n/a	\$70-89,000	1 Master's degree	Instructional Trainer
Halle Harlowe	57	n/a	\$50-69,000	1 Associate's degree	Customer Relations

Table 2

*Adolescent Data*

Adolescents' names	Gender and age	Gifted?	Grade	AP Course	AP Test Score	GPA
Atlas Anderson	M/17	Yes	11	AP Language and Composition	3	3.60
Chase Clarke	M/17	Yes	11	AP Statistics	3	3.10
Desiree Diamond	F/17	Yes	11	AP Psychology	4	4.00
Gray Gavin	M/17	Yes	11	AP Language and Composition	4	3.83
Harmony Harlowe	F/17	Yes	11	AP U.S. History	3	3.83

raise children who achieve academically and who are college bound (Spera et al., 2007).

Social cultural capital passed from one generation to the next, advantages children

regarding their interactions in educational spheres, such as schools (Lareau, 2003).

Third, family income range, self-identified by parents, was used as a guide regarding social class. Justification for income criterion is that income is one of the most commonly utilized social class indicators in research (Lacy; 2007; Lareau & Conley 2008). As mentioned in the literature review in this study, two-parent, household annual income was \$58,000 in 2010, per the middle class income guide in the comprehensive study conducted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration for the Office of the Vice President of the United States Middle Class Task Force (2010) on the middle class. Lacy (2007) stated that income of \$50,000 and above helped her to conceptually frame the Black, middle class for her study. A range of \$50,000 and above was used in this study, and also as discussed, this income figure mirrors income of the White, middle class. This study's purposeful sample was in part framed by income, education, and occupation. As also previously mentioned, research on Blacks that excludes, or does not distinguish between Black people of economic advantage and the economically disadvantaged, has inaccurately generalized inequity issues in education faced by this wide-ranging group, and has at best, masked, and at worst, dismissed systemic problems due to race not associated with poverty. As also previously mentioned, two middle class single mothers were included in this study. African American, middle class single parents are representative of a segment of the respondents to this study who met the criteria for inclusion, just as they also reflect a segment of middle class parents of academic high achievers in the larger society, be they

Black, White, Asian, or Latino/Hispanic. The importance of a data collection process that adequately captured the best research data possible is detailed in the data collection phase of this study.

### **Study Context and Data Collection Methods**

As discussed, a purposeful, criterion-based, sampling method was utilized to identify potential participants for this qualitative research study. Total student enrollment at Zenith High School (school's name is changed to maintain anonymity) in fall 2013 was 1,731 for school year 2013-2014. Demographics by race for school year 2013 were: White students represented 49% of the total student population; Black students represented 21%; Latino students represented 18%; Asian and Pacific Islander students represented 8%; and American Indian/Alaskan and multiracial students represented a combined 4%. Of the total enrollment of students, 33% participated in AP courses, and 24% were identified as gifted.

An Excel query was conducted in March 2014 by a Zenith High School administrator not affiliated with this research study. The query generated the names and contact information of African American parents of a current junior or senior student at the school who took, or was taking an AP course, or was in the Gifted Education program, or both. Students in high school in the state of Georgia can be both in Gifted Education and also take separate AP courses, or they can be solely in the Gifted Education program, or they can take AP courses independent of the Gifted Education program. There were 66 African American junior and senior students identified as potentially having taken an AP course the previous year, and 21 in the Gifted Education program. All 21 in the Gifted Education program had also taken at least one AP course.

Although teacher recommendations of students are made for AP classes at Zenith High School, teacher recommendations are not required to take AP classes. Parents can make a request for participation on behalf of their student. On the other hand, students identified by the state as qualified for the Gifted Education program are required to have met multiple state requirements; above-average, highly exceeding standardized test scores, above-average, highly exceeding grade averages, and also receiving teacher and administrator recommendations for placement.

A second Zenith High School administrator, also not affiliated with this study, emailed a letter of interest to the parents identified through the Excel queries (see Appendix D). The letter of interest was the first recruitment tool used to: a) inform potential participants of the study, b) generate parents' interest in the study, c) gain voluntary consent by parents who are interested in participating, d) guide interested parents toward completing an online questionnaire (see Appendix A) which was this study's main screening tool. Parents' who voluntarily consented to participate in the online questionnaire clicked "yes" on the first page of the document before proceeding to the questionnaire. Online screening information gained through the online questionnaire was used to initially identify whether parents met study participation criteria.

There were 13 total respondents to the online questionnaire. Of the respondents to the questionnaire, three couples, and two families headed by single parents met the screening criteria (see Tables 1 & 2). None who fit the criteria and responded to the interest email letter were the parents of a May 2014 graduating senior. In an effort to contact the parents of seniors, as well as any junior and senior parents who may not have received the initial interest letter sent by email, two separate hard copy mailings of the

Letter of Interest were also sent to all of the parents in the purposeful sample in early and late May 2014. This was also done to account for possible changes to, or problems with, parents' email addresses. The second hard copy mailing was targeted just to the parents of seniors. No parents of a graduating senior responded to, or took part in the study.

I contacted the eight parents by telephone that completed the online consent form and online screening questionnaire, and the eight parents also met the study's additional participant criteria. I telephoned them beginning in late May 2014 through mid June 2014 to set up interview appointments. The online consent form worked as the cover page for my online questionnaire. Informed participation consent is required for research protocol approval by the Institutional Review Board; it includes specific verbiage designed to inform and protect potential study participants. The primary objective of the consent form is to protect and inform participants of their protections and rights. The consent form explains to participants their rights should they decide to take part in a research study, and also their rights to withdraw from a research study at any time. It fully explains informed consent, and that all information gathered would be kept confidential. The chief way that a qualitative researcher seeks to protect participants is through anonymity, through the use of pseudonyms (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2007, p. 422). Confidentiality is closely connected to anonymity (Wiles et al., 2007, p. 417). Managing informed consent for the protection of this study's participants is significant in the collection and storing of personal information and data, and pseudonyms were assigned to all of this study's participants.

The online questionnaire (see Appendix B), the main screening tool for this qualitative study, helped me gather additional pertinent data that specifically identified

the parents who met my study's required criteria apart from others in the purposeful sample who did not meet criteria. The online questionnaire was used as a recruitment tool to: identify parents who fit specific study criteria, identify parents interested in taking part, and to gather additional pertinent data to help inform potential participants' appropriateness for study participation. A questionnaire is defined as a research instrument that consists of a series of questions designed for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaires can be highly effective in the management of data collection. Questionnaires can also help with time management for participants and also for researchers regarding the collecting of research information that does not require lengthy explanation (Sonnenberg, Riedieger, Wrzus, & Wagner, 2012). The study questionnaire includes questions such as, "How do you self-identify?" and, "Has your child passed a Gifted Education course in high school with at least an 80/B overall grade average?" (see Appendix B).

### **Reflexivity**

I have had a long-standing interest in this research area. Life experience as an African American student, parent, and education professional, have brought about different challenges and concerns that people of color like myself face regarding perceptions about intelligence and academic achievement capacity and race. As a scholar and an educator I want my research to contribute positive understandings about African American adult parents of African American adolescents who are high academic achievers. African American, middle class parents' voices have long been excluded and ignored in the largely unconstructive discussion of education and minority achievement. Scholarly discourse about African Americans and the achievement gap commonly blames

Black parents, Black students, and the Black community...through the recycling of ideology of African American moral, cultural, and intellectual deficiency (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 9). As discussed earlier, the concept of racialism, or racializing the lens of critical observation in research, is a positive phenomenon. Racialism's valuation is positive not negative; it recognizes the contributions and particularities that frame racial group experience (Brookfield, 2005, p. 281). My intention is to bring about greater understanding of Black, middle class parents lived experiences regarding academic achievement filtered through a racialized construction of knowing.

I attended predominantly White, middle class, elementary, middle, and high schools. My husband, an African American, white collar professional, with a degree in electrical engineering, also attended predominantly White, middle class, elementary, middle, and high schools. We have two children. My children attended predominantly White, middle class, elementary, middle, and high schools, and predominantly White universities. In addition, my teaching experiences have been at predominantly White, middle class, high schools.

I grew up hearing my college educated parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts discuss strategies with me, my siblings, and my cousins that we should use to spur academic and social success both in and out of school, and that education and academic achievement worked to check racism. I did not however have an understanding, outside of my own personal family experience, as to whether or not other Black, middle class parents and adult family members shared an ideology of achievement with their adolescents that encouraged utilizing above average academic achievement as a form of resistance to racism. I believe it is important to understand whether Black, middle class

parents view high academic achievement as racism resistant, where this perspective may have come from for the parents, what the parents have shared with their adolescents, and the consequences or results of what the parents have shared. A rich, narrative story told by African American, middle class parents about what they share with their adolescents that supports racism resistance through high academic achievement in AP and Gifted is one that can help to inform adult education change, learning and growth in new ways.

An economically privileged life is a gift, I know. It affords great possibilities. As a Black person however, I also just as clearly know about, and have experienced racism, an unpredictable socially, politically, and economically oppressive wildcard used by powerbrokers to squash possibilities. Evans-Winters (2011) said that her family and close adults to her family “encouraged [her] to be a strong-minded individual, as well as the best student” (p. 7) that she could be, and that her family taught her that education could help her battle the daily struggle against racism. Why some of her friends “did not overcome many of the social barriers that affect school achievement” (p.6) and did not reap social or economic opportunities, spurred her research on resilience and academic achievement. Lacy (2007), also an African American woman, surmised that most Blacks in the middle class only achieve a “variant of ‘success’ that circumvents [assimilation] towards upward mobility” (p. xii) in a country obsessed with race, set against a backdrop of ongoing systemic racial discrimination. This observation helped spur Lacy’s (2007) research on Black, middle class success identity construction. Thus, contextually informed perspectives about race, class, and achievement by these African American researchers and many others, support the notion of being able to critically focus on

monitoring my own biases as an African American in gathering rich data from the participants, and interpreting findings regarding the research questions guiding this study.

### **Methodological Issues in Researching African American Participants**

There are various reasons why adults decide to participate in research, and dispositional barriers such as negative past experiences or fear need to be addressed to effectively target participants (Merriam & Brocket, 2007). “The most important consideration in sampling for any qualitative study is that the individuals have information or experiences related to the research questions that they are willing to share” (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010 p. 163). I hypothesized that dispositional barriers relative to participation in this study might have been reduced for the parents who decided to participate because I identified myself as a high school AP teacher in the interest letter to parents. At the outset of the study, I did not know my positionality as an African American woman would have any bearing on the potential participation by African American parents. Tillman (2006) has contributed to the literature about theoretical approaches taken by African Americans and other scholars of color to conduct culturally sensitive research on African Americans and other people of color, framed by culturally congruent research methods, and cultural resistance to theoretical dominance (p.269). Culturally sensitive research approaches use qualitative methods including interviewing and reflective journaling (Tillman, 2006, p. 269). “Culturally sensitive research positions culture as central to the research process” (Tillman, 2006, p. 265). Research indicates that when study participants share characteristics, such as gender or race, these are dynamics that can “affect the research process” (Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. 659). Participants may “assume that the interviewer’s status...assure[s] not only

understanding but also empathy" (Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. 656), or on the other hand, awkwardness may occur because of assumptions that instead can, "hamper the flow of conversation" (Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. 656) during interviews. What is evident in the interview process is that no two interview situations are alike, and "this does not change when women interview women, or when Blacks interview Blacks" (Johnson-Bailey, 1999, p. 668). There are White researchers who have interviewed White people proficiently, and there are Black researchers who have interviewed Black people proficiently. "Every researcher struggles with representing the 'truth' of their findings, as well as allowing the 'voices' of their participants to be heard" (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001, p. 414). What an "insider" learns (Merriam, et al, 2001), or researcher who shares characteristics with participants, will be different from, but is as valid, as someone who is an "outsider" (Merriam, et.al, 2001), or a researcher who is different from participants. Culturally sensitive research can lead to theories and practices intended to address the "culturally specific circumstances of the lives of African Americans" (Tillman, 2006, p. 271). I worked to check bias through a continuous process of documenting memos, triangulation of the data gathered, and frequent member checks.

The African American, middle class parents of academically successful adolescents attending Zenith High School likely support the school's environment for learning. Parents' perceptions about school environment play a strong role in their perceptions about their children's academic abilities and potential (Spera, Wentzel & Matto, 2007). Establishing trust early on with potential study participants is of significant importance in qualitative research. The Black, middle class, adult parents of highly successful students may have been inclined to talk with me about their experiences

because their children are proven academic achievers. I initially hypothesized that this particular group of participating parents would want to discuss how they encourage their adolescents to achieve in AP and gifted where Black students are most often in the minority, because they had academically successful children.

Nonetheless, research has a quite long, and largely unpleasant, “scientific” history when it comes to African American people, intelligence, and academic capacity. Remnants of the Eugenics Movement, which erroneously explained academic failure as cognitive intellectual deficiency linked to minority group membership, continues today to be a pervasive perspective and socially embedded prejudgetment, in the deficit-based constructions of academic underachievement regarding Black people (Howard, 2010, p. 29). Some Black, middle class parents simply may not have wanted to take part, or may have hesitated to take part in my study because they are aware of the history of the documented dangers of research gone awry when Black people have willingly, and also unwillingly, participated. Culturally sensitive, contemporary research on the perspectives of Blacks in the middle class is warranted. Historic research perspectives on the “Black middle class have been inadequate in assessing and understanding the social, economic, political, and psychological status of the Black middle class” (Durant & Louden, 1986, p. 260).

What is very clear though is that despite evidence of increased economic, educational, and occupational, proximity to Whites today, many Black families express that they do not believe that their children receive equitable educational opportunity at school (Lacy 2007; Wells, Holme, Atanda & Revilla, 2005). I surmised that the African American, middle class parents who chose to take part in this study would want to share

their stories. Frustrating dominant culture assumptions about Blacks as intellectually inferior is an individual and collective minority group concern (Lacy, 2007). Contemporary conversations about Black school achievement, like virtually all conversations about African American school performance, remain focused on underachievement (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 6). Scholars know little about the cultural capital that Black, middle class adults possess, or how they activate it and use it to cope with discrimination; Black, middle class likely utilize compatible cultural capital to negotiate educational systems with their children (Lacy, 2007). Potential participants were informed and made aware that this research study was about what they shared about achievement, race and class with their African American, adolescent academic achievers.

### **Narrative Analysis Methods**

Narrative has come to refer to almost anything that uses stories as data (Clandinin, 2013, p. 11). Narrative investigation in research has touched almost every discipline; it reveals social cultural life through an individual's story (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). An adequate account of a life story illuminates the connections among the series of narratives (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, p. 7). I was aware, as a researcher using narrative analysis methods, that as I attempted to capture the stories of my study's subjects, my rendering drew on resources from my own cultural context in my analyses (Riessman, 1993, p.10). Narrative analysis, such as thematic analysis, has been used with a variety of qualitative research methodologies (p. 12). Narrative inquiry methods utilized with CRT and CRAI as in this study, critically inform the narrative process through the lens of race. Thematic narrative categorical analysis involves "reading the subtext as openly as possible" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, p. 113). Defining major content categories

that emerge is one way of sorting material. I used a narrative categorical analysis method to “descriptively formulate a picture” (p. 114) of racism resistant, academic achievement ideological perspectives in this study’s participants’ lives, and the lives of their adolescents. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posit that narrative inquiry allows the researcher to “conceptualize the inquiry experience as a storied one on several levels” (p. 71). In constructing narratives of experience “there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (p. 71). Narrative inquirers become a part of the experience while they engage with participants. “Narrative inquiry is relational” (p. 81) and “close relationships with participants [are] necessary work in narrative inquiry” (p.82). Narrative research has increasingly become associated with storytelling (p.77), and the “making sense of life as lived” (p.78).

A thematic analysis of the interview data was conducted. Using a narrative analysis approach in identifying themes encourages the observation of “resonances and echoes that reverberate across accounts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) in the storied unfolding of the lives of the study’s participants. Of principal interest for researchers utilizing narrative methods of analysis is conceptualizing the inquiry experience as a storied one on multiple levels (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71). I intentionally focused on identifying “threads” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) or particular categorical plotlines that wove through the participants’ narrative accounts. I also looked across accounts for shared threads of experience in the lived stories of study participants. Narrative accounts offer a way of understanding experience, and “people are storytellers by nature” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, p. 7). Careful analysis was

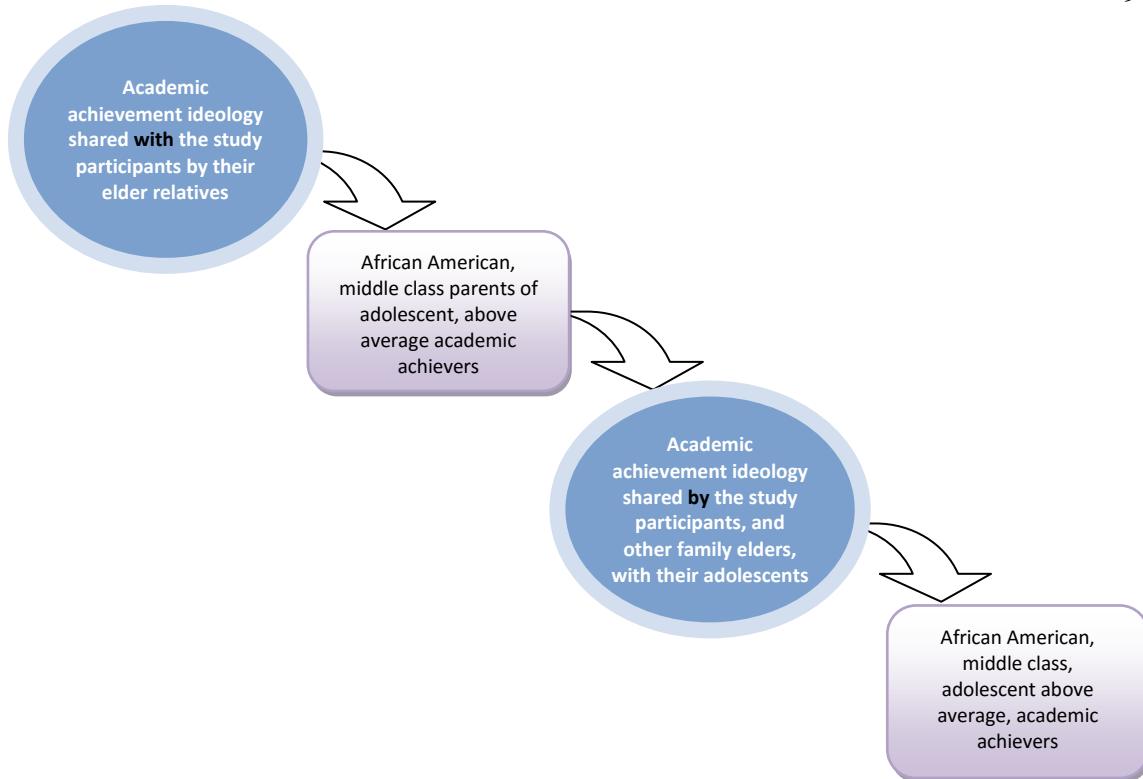
employed regarding identifying emerging themes, and the process is explained in the Data Analysis Procedures. “What we get out of a text is related to what we bring to it” and “narrative is not simply subject matter, but also organization” (Holley & Colyar, 2009, p. 684.) And knowledge generation “comes directly from perceptions of experience, and is social and constitutive” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 65). As a researcher making decisions regarding the resonance of themes I made critical decisions about how readers would view and understand this study.

Helping to justify the use of narrative methodology viewed through a critical theoretical lens is an overview of two qualitative texts previously discussed that have ample relevance. Lacy (2007) utilized the narrative interview as a tool to critically observe how social class and race intersect in the identity formation of Black, middle class adults in her sweeping study of participants from several suburban, Washington, D.C. communities. Carter (2008a) used narrative interviews as tools to critically capture the stories of a small group of African American, middle class, academically high achieving adolescents’ and their ideological perspectives about academic achievement as a form of racism resistance in a predominantly White high school. The researchers in both of these studies called for more nuanced qualitative research on the role of race and class in the lives of Black parents and the schooling experiences of children, observed through a lens of critical observation. Parent engagement observed through a CRT lens enables researchers to understand Black parents methods that they perceive that they use to influence the racial dynamics and relationships of their children’s schooling experiences, particularly where they are in the minority (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Narrative inquirers constantly look for “continuity in experience – past, present and

future, and how this experience relates to the contextual dimensions" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 69).

### **Data Analysis Process**

My data analysis started while interview data were being collected. I used an audit trail in gathering, sorting, comparing and checking the data. I logged my research activities and reflections in memos explaining the documenting of data collection, analysis, and coding (see Appendix H). An audit trail is defined as providing an account of research procedures and decisions used to collect data to help maintain and monitor data trustworthiness (Carcary, 2009, p. 15). I initially hypothesized, for the purposes of organizing and analyzing the interview data, that critical themes would emerge that were salient to the parents that reflected parental perceptions and behaviors shared with adolescents about schooling experiences. I read and reviewed the interview data many times as I transcribed, sorted and coded key phrases into themes and subthemes and then continuously refined the themes. Excerpts from the interview data coding and sorting process help illustrate the observation of threads of evidence sprinkled across the transcripts and needing to be pieced together (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.72). An example of my initial sorting and coding appears in Appendix H. Analysis becomes clearer when critical categories or themes are defined, relationships between them are established, and they are integrated into an elegant, credible interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 209). I developed a concept map to help visualize my coding process of emerging themes as I read and rereading the interview transcripts (See Figure 1). I identified, refined, and revised multiple themes, and then coded responses by theme. Themes



*Figure 1. Visual Concept Map: Achievement ideology shared within participants' families*

emerged that helped me to respond to the three research questions guiding this study.

Themes were sorted using the Marshall and Rossman (2011) analytic process described next.

### **Chained Narrative Approach**

The processes and procedures of analysis involved in finding the biographical stories of this study's participants perspectives on academic achievement, race, and social class, and later the stories that they shared with their adolescents are discussed in more detail here. To find the stories, I used Mishler's (1992) "chained narrative" approach, as described and modeled by Butler-Kisber (2011) to help frame and spur coherence, cohesiveness, and continuity (pp.72-73) in the parents' stories that emerged from the participants' interviews. Mishler (1990) posited that meaningful analysis of narratives

requires close attention to the interview coding process; inquiry guided researchers look for respondents' crafting of identity formation in the ways that questions are answered.

Narrative analysis requires researchers to explain discourse through the collecting, describing, analyzing and interpreting of interviews (Mishler, 1990, p. 426).

### **Marshall and Rossman Analytic Procedures**

A step-by-step analytic process involved following the Marshall and Rossman (2011) seven phases of analytic procedures. It is a fluid process that allowed me to work back and forth between phases (p. 209):

- (1) organizing the data, (2) immersion in the data, (3) generating categories and themes, (4) coding the data, (5) offering interpretations through analytic memos, (6) searching for alternative understandings and (7) writing the report or format for presenting the study (p. 209).

An audit trail, as previously defined, is iterated throughout the entire process of data collection. "An audit trail in qualitative research consists of a thorough collection of documentation regarding all aspects of the research" (Rodgers, 2008). The audit trail helps follow the stages of the research process, traces the research logic, and helps determine whether a study's findings may be relied upon as a platform for further inquiry, and as a basis for decision making (Carcary, 2009, p. 16).

To capture the interview data in the first and second phases of analysis, I used traditional audiotape recordings. I saved the interview recordings to a file on my personal computer, which is password protected, for security. While recording the interviews of each couple or single parent, I was careful to maintain the corresponding

pseudonyms assigned to them. I labeled each interview audio file per the date and location of the interview. I listened to each interview repeatedly while I was transcribing.

I transcribed, analyzed, and coded the interviews of the three couples, and both single parents. I conducted face-to-face member checks with the study's participants to review and discuss their profile stories with them that were also developed from the data collected in the questionnaires, audiotapes, transcripts, and field notes. Member checks afforded participants the time and opportunity to check the development of the data, and to clarify their responses in the co-construction and development of this study. Member checks also give researchers the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and to ask for clarifications and make new observations.

### **Triangulation and Member Checking**

In the third and fourth phases of analysis, I used triangulation to help confirm data findings. Triangulation uses multiple sources and methods to check trustworthiness of the data gathered (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Changes or clarifications made to narrative accounts during the member checking process engaged in with participants were incorporated. Member checking requires the researcher to take tentative interpretations of data to study participants and ask participants "if results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Member checking invites participants to confirm a researcher's findings, and/or make changes and help to further ensure research trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 42). Participants' were provided the opportunity to review their narrative profiles as well as the transcripts. Following this step, I then went on to analyze, sort, code, and develop the data from the second interviews through the same data refining and theme categorizing processes that I took when analyzing the first interviews.

In the fourth and fifth phases of analysis I developed a visual code/concept map to organize the way multiple themes emerged from both the first and second interviews. The interview data evolved into major themes and subthemes. What emerged is what had been shared with study participants as adolescents, and what the study participants shared with their adolescents, including rich conversations, cautionary tales, and vivid family stories. Adolescents whose parents discuss with them why something may go right or wrong have higher levels of achievement than those whose parents only discuss the positive (Lindsay, 2011). Problem-solving and reasoning skills are significant to the development of Black students' racial and achievement self-conceptions and awareness of racial discrimination (Carter, 2008b). The visual code/concept map (see Figure 1) helped me to reflect upon the sorting, coding, and analyzing of the interview data. Themes emerging from the data were repeatedly refined throughout the analysis process. The themes are explained in detail in the Findings section of this study.

As I examined the interviews I highlighted passages in the transcripts and then made detailed notations about why certain passages might support an understanding of the three research questions guiding this study. These steps helped to inform my sorting, coding, and analyzing process. Developing the data through emerging themes is a constantly evolving process that demands careful reading, and cautious sorting of categories, and cultivating additional categories, and revising categories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998, pp. 113-114). There is no substitute for intimate engagement with the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 210). I continuously wrote memos to myself about how the data were coming together as I identified and reflect upon the major themes.

## **Interpretations and Alternate Understandings**

In the sixth phase of analysis, the researcher writes and reports his or her thoughts about how data are coming together in clusters, patterns, or themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 213). Clustering is the observance and mapping of overarching relationships occurring in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 215). The researcher sees how the data “nest in their context, and what varieties appear, and how frequently different varieties appear” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 213). Searching for alternate understandings is also imperative during this phase. As the researcher develops categories and themes in the coding of the data, memos help identify key findings that also help evaluate the plausibility of her developing understanding of it (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher is constantly challenging the explanations and interpretations put forward in the data and looks for surprises and variations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 220). Searching for alternate understandings was appropriate in helping me to refine and challenge the soundness and trustworthiness of my data gathering methods.

## **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research one must ask questions such as, “Do we believe the claims that a researcher puts forward?” and “On what grounds do we judge these as credible?” and “Are the claims potentially useful for the problematic we are concerned with?” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 40). And, does the examination of questions viewed through racialized cultural contexts impact trustworthiness? Kirkland, (1995) found that cultural context is actually an important component of evaluation in arguments supporting multicultural validity (p. 400). The conceptualization of multicultural validity

carries with it explicit social justice agenda (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 42).

Multicultural validity refers to the accuracy, or trustworthiness, of understandings and judgments, actions, and consequences, across multiple, intersecting dimensions of cultural diversity (Kirkland, 1995, p. 400). Culture is not neutral and when it is not identified, the default, dominant cultural perspective operates, and often with oppressive consequences (p. 402). Observations made from the cultural and social class views of participants encourage a methodological approach that supports trustworthiness through the expression of the interactions within participants' particular frames of reference.

As articulated in the third and fourth phases of data analysis in this study, internal validity was addressed through triangulation and the member checking process.

Participants reviewed the transcribed interviews, checked the written transcriptions for accuracy, and also checked the development of themes. In addition, I continuously checked for consistency in the data collected, and reported detailed information about data collection procedures. My notes reflect my interactions with the qualitative data, as well as the findings, to assure that in depth description and credible inquiry was clearly articulated.

External validity is the extent to which the results of the research study are generalizable (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010, p. 29). Research on African American, middle class parents' CRAI, and its impact on academically high achieving Black adolescents in AP and Gifted classes had not been conducted at the time of this study. Understandings gained from this study, although not generalizable, will provide insight into ethnic minority, middle class parent engagement currently receiving little research attention. Teachers, counselors, and administrators are routinely exposed to

research that views African Americans through a lens of deficiency. Black families have long been socially characterized as primarily dysfunctional, and less capable of fostering academic achievement in their children. Although this study is not generalizable, I hope that what can be gleaned from it spurs research and discussion, as well as educator, parent, and policymaker action. Long overdue is equitable educational experience, supportive of fulfilling the academic achievement potential of the majority of Black adolescents in public high schools. I also hope and believe that the findings from this study have the potential to show that: a) There is racialized cultural capital that some Black, middle class parents tap into to strategically support and impact adolescent achievement and thwart racism in schooling experience where race can be an issue; b) adult education scholars, many of whom focus on liberating adult learning (Brookfield, 2005), must take an active, role in critically examining parenting and social justice issues faced by minority parents, and thus students, in schooling experiences to help “unmask power, challenge dominant ideology, and overcome alienation” (p. 2) in education environments; c) public school system leadership must recognize that AP and Gifted screening practice continues to significantly exclude African American parents from the decision-making processes to include their children in rigorous courses, and that something must be done about it; d) concerned actors, including educators of adults, must actively inform Black parents of the benefits of their children participating in AP and Gifted classes prior to going to college; and finally that e) new paradigms in research regarding the academic achievement gap that are not focused on minority deficiency must be explored.

## Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the methodology utilized in this qualitative research study. The study design, sample selection process, narrative data collection, data analysis methods, reflexivity and challenges to the research design are discussed. What Perry, Steele, and Hilliard- (2003) report on a shared philosophy of the importance of educational attainment for African Americans, passed from one generation to the next, has resonance (p. 10):

Over generations African Americans understood that the task of achievement was distinctive, and that out of their lived experience they developed a theory of knowledge, and a philosophy of education that was capable of responding to dilemmas of achievement embedded in this task.

I maintain that the philosophy of education – freedom for literacy and literacy for freedom, racial uplift, citizenship and leadership – over the years has been encoded in the African American narrative tradition.

Perry, Steele & Hilliard (2003) observed that the “task of academic achievement for African Americans in the context of school in the United States is distinctive” (p. 4). It is my great hope that this study has brought to light what a select group of parents’ report having done to support their adolescents in getting there.

I interviewed three couples and two single parents who are the African American, middle class, adult parents of adolescents who are above average academic achievers from the same high school in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. I obtained approval from the principal of Zenith High School (the school name has been changed) which is on file with the southeastern school system. Potential participants were initially identified

through the purposeful sampling technique. A questionnaire was made available online for potential participants who voluntarily took part in a screening process. The questionnaire helped to identify whether potential participants met all of the criteria for inclusion in this study. Once online confidentiality forms and questionnaires were completed, the parents who met the study's criteria were contacted for interviews which were conducted from May through July 2014. Rich data was gathered from the questionnaires, interviews, field notes, follow up questions, and face-to-face member checks to observe and understand the lived experiences of the study's participants relative to the research questions.

As mentioned, the data was transcribed, analyzed, sorted, and coded, and face-to-face member checking provided the participants with the opportunity to review the verbatim transcripts as well as the narrative that developed from the themes and categories. Data from the interviews, member checks, field notes, and observations was carefully analyzed, refined and reanalyzed to understand and interpret themes and categories. Memo-s and notes were also kept during the interview process that reflects my interactions with, and interpretations of, the data.

In my reflexivity statement I discussed my subjectivities that influence the study. I worked to try and monitor my biases and assumptions that impacted my interpretations of the data throughout the study. I also worked to remain open to examining alternative interpretations and explanations regarding the plausibility of research findings in this study.

## CHAPTER 4

## PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

The purpose of this study is to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Readers should expect that some of the narrative passages are longer than others. The participants' narratives in this study are provided to give the reader insight into how they came to understand how race and social class operated in their lives. Pseudonyms shield the identities of the study's participants as well as the identities of their adolescent offspring. Participants' profiles contextualize their perspectives regarding the impact of significant adults in their lives, i.e., parents, grandparents, older siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, and teachers on their experiences as adolescents in high school regarding academic achievement and race. Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?
3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

The participants' profiles also provide the opportunity to contextualize readers' understanding of the lives of the adult participants, and the significant relationships that they had with adults in their lives when they were adolescents. Recollections about their upbringing help to inform when, where, how, and under what circumstances their self perceptions about academic achievement utilized as a mechanism to help mitigate racism, came from. Information gathered was developed from what the study participants recalled that their parents and grandparents discussed with them about academic achievement resisting racism when they were adolescents.

Profiles of Chad and Claire Clarke, Adam and Athena Anderson, Draco and Diana Desmond, Halle Harlowe, and Giselle Gavin follow. The majority in the study, six of the eight adult participants, was either in gifted education classes, AP classes, or academically accelerated programs when they were in high school. Among the couples, at least one parent per couple was in an advanced or accelerated academic course or program of study when in high school.

### **Chad Clarke**

Chad is a 45 year old professional engineer who has been married to his college sweetheart, Claire, a 45 year old elementary school teacher for 21 years. Both have bachelor's degrees. They have three children. Their oldest son Chase, a seventeen year old gifted identified student has maintained an above average grade point average in high school, and he has taken several AP classes. Chase attends the neighborhood public high school. The Clarkes earn a combined annual income above \$90,000, and own a large single family home in a subdivision of homes ranging from \$300,000 to over half a million dollars.

Chad did not grow up middle class. He grew up poor, yet he talked about being very well cared for by his parents and older siblings and not wanting for anything. His oldest sibling is twenty years older than he is. His mother and father were rural southern farmers just one generation past sharecropping, who could barely read or write. But, their son Chad was identified as academically gifted early. He was placed in gifted education classes in elementary school. Education was very important in his family. However, Chad said that his parents, who had experienced the harsh realities of racial segregation growing up, were quite concerned for his safety as the only Black student in his gifted classes:

I grew up on a farm milking cows and feeding hogs and chickens and so forth, but farm work didn't supersede my schoolwork. Schools were integrated, but I was the only Black kid in gifted and talented classes from second grade on. I was in class with all White kids, and that's the people I hung out with. That was of special concern to my dad and mom with them growing up in Jim Crow times. My dad constantly feared that I'd end up swinging from a rope somewhere because I might be in the wrong place at the wrong time with those kids.

One of the first lessons about race that Chad recalled learning at home as a young boy from his parents and adult siblings was that although he was smart, he was told that he must understand that he was different from his classmates at school. And not only was he different, but he was told that violent things could happen to him because of the color of his skin if he was not careful around his classmates. White classmates were to be wary of, explained his parents, as well as White teachers, and White people in general. Being

smart in school, he quickly learned at home, could protect him only so far against racism. Chad said as a result of repeatedly hearing this information, he closely self-monitored his behavior with classmates and teachers, and reported back to his parents about his schooling experiences each day. He understood that if he didn't, he might jeopardize his life.

As he grew, Chad recalled that his parents had regular talks with him about race and doing well both in and outside of the school environment, and what academic achievement could mean to his future. Chad said that he viewed the talks he had with his parents as positive and critical to teaching him about different aspects of racism. Chad said that his father taught him to use school achievement to his advantage. His father's stories of family members navigating racism through educational attainment made Chad aware of the importance of his own academic achievement. Chad's father eventually became the head custodian at the local county courthouse and told Chad stories about the uneven hand of justice in the town:

We had talks about race all of the time, my dad and I. There was always some type of discussion on a daily basis, about what my dad saw in the courthouse, and his stories of how unfair the criminal justice system was for Black and Hispanic folk in our hometown. I realized that I may have had some racist teachers in high school. I could tell that there was some tension when a teacher was flabbergasted when I made a 100 on a test, or that I was a lot smarter than most of the White kids.

It wasn't until Chad's senior year in high school that racism in the school environment became very apparent. Chad was supposed to be the salutatorian of his graduating class

in his senior year. His family came to learn that he was cheated out of that experience due to institutional racism. Legal representation was sought by the family to investigate the matter. There had never been a Black valedictorian or salutatorian in his hometown up to that time. His older sisters and brothers hired a civil rights attorney to take the case and look for evidence to sue the school system. The outcome was traumatic. Chad said:

The district's records were subpoenaed, which at that time were on paper. The attorney and my family saw the anomaly. The school system could easily change whatever they wanted to, and they had. My dad said, 'I've still got to live in this town. You're going to college and leave. I don't want my house burned down and crosses burned in my yard, and the cattle dead,' which were things my dad had seen happen firsthand to others in our town as a result of racism. So, the family chose not to pursue a lawsuit. It was a big blow. Reality hit home for me early.

Chad's adult siblings ultimately opted not to pursue litigation against the school district. Safeguarding Chad's father's life and property from potentially violent repercussions in the town prevailed in his family. Chad had heard stories about violent retaliation due to race all of his life, so the protection of his father came first. This experience for Chad was the most significant about the reality of racism that he faced in high school. Its impact has resonated with him his entire life. Chad shook his head and breathed deeply after retelling this painful event, and he reminded me that it had occurred in the 1980s, decades after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and the American civil rights movement. This experience had been as devastating to Chad as if he had been barred from entering the doors to the schoolhouse to begin with.

**Claire Clarke**

Claire's family made several cross country moves when she was growing up. Her high school, located in the southwestern part of the U.S., was in a middle class, integrated, suburban neighborhood. Claire's high school was 90% White. Neither her father nor her mother had college degrees, but they did both finish high school. Her father worked for a major U.S. corporation in the company's credit department. Her parents stressed the importance of high academic achievement and college to get ahead in life. Her parents regularly talked with her about not following in their footsteps and using education to positively impact her quality of life. They insisted that she take rigorous courses in high school, go on to college, and get a degree. Claire's recollections focused on what she was taught by her parents to be watchful for regarding race, schooling, and achievement:

My parents grew up in a time when people were very prejudiced. They taught me that although things were better, 'it' still existed. They often said, 'If you have a college degree, they can't take that away from you. You have to be twice as good and get that degree because you will only get so far in life without it.' Even though I was raised well, and was never deprived of things, they just did not want me to go through the things that they went through. Education meant everything. Sharing the perspective with their child of having to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites was a regular discussion in Claire's house, and in the homes of most of the participants in this study. Claire's parents shared with her that she had to do more to stay competitive with her White peers for grades, and later after college for a good job. Claire

recalled her parents talking with her about race and excelling academically in the gifted courses that she took in high school:

I was in mostly gifted classes in high school. I always felt that I had to prove myself. In my studies I had to do better. I had to have the grades. There was Johnny over here, and me over there, and I was told at home that I had to always do twice as well. My parents were very positive in supporting my efforts.

Claire's said that her parents hired a tutor when she struggled in geometry class. She remembered that her parents sacrificed monetarily to provide that tutor for her. Claire felt obligated to be successful in that class, yet feelings of obligation were positive. She said, "I felt that I owed it to my family to learn as much from the tutor as I could, and to do what was necessary to learn to achieve in geometry class." She remembered being the only Black student in the class, and telling this to her parents. Her parents were proud of her academic accomplishments, and they did not want her overall grade average to slip because of that one class. When she told her parents that she was making friends with the students, she said, "My parents tone changed, and they warned me to be aware and careful around them." They did not want Claire to experience racism as they had, and they wanted her to be aware of what to look out for:

There was never anything that I needed for school. I remember struggling with geometry, and my parents got a tutor for me to get through it. So things and such like that they would do. They also explained racism. My parents told me stories about being racially ostracized to kind of prepare me to be on the lookout. Like if you're with your White friends and something bad happens, the authorities are going to question the Black person's involvement first.

Although Claire talked with White students in her gifted education classes in high school, she said, “I was mindful that I was different.” She did not want to open herself up to comments about being the only Black person in her gifted classes, and she kept to herself a lot. She also was less apt to socialize with White classmates outside of the school environment. Her careful social interactions in the classroom did not deter her from high academic achievement in high school, however. Claire’s parents were very encouraging about her grades. Her parents asked her to talk about her experiences at school every day. Claire, a soft spoken person, said, “My parents convinced me to speak up at school when I had questions for teachers or the school administrators.” They were all White, and she felt like she would receive repercussions from them due to her race. She said, “My parents gave me the courage and support to speak up,” and she also knew that they would come to her aid if she reported anything happening at school that did not go well.

### **Athena Anderson**

Athena and Adam Anderson, ages 53 and 50 respectively, have been married for 26 years. Athena is an executive chef, and Adam is a sound technician. Athena has a bachelor’s degree, and Adam an associate’s degree. They earn a combined annual income of between \$50,000- \$69,000. They own their single family home in a subdivision of beautiful single family homes with five bedrooms and four baths at \$250,000 and above. They have three children. Their son, Atlas, who is their youngest child, is a gifted identified student and a high achiever taking several AP classes. He also attends the same public high school as the other adolescents whose parents participated in this research study.

Athena lived with her parents in the northeast when she was a child until they divorced, and then she lived with her grandparents for a number of years in the south. Her grandmother was a practicing nurse, and her grandfather was a military service man who served in WWII. Her grandparents lived in a middle class neighborhood. Athena discussed her upbringing and her grandmother's views about educational achievement and race. Athena's grandmother was very involved in her granddaughter's life and Athena described her as, "a force to be reckoned with" when talks turned to discussing the necessity of getting a high quality high school education. Athena recalled her grandparents' positive reinforcement and encouragement to excel in high school, as well as their blunt conversations with her.

My mom and my grandparents let me know the sky was the limit. There was never a discussion about *if* I was going to college, but *which* college I was going to attend. I didn't take easy classes in high school. My grandparents experienced a lot of racism, and they told me stories. Education was important. They had friends of different nationalities, but at the same time they said don't be dumb because a lot of people still are 'that way' about race. Don't live in a delusional world about racism. We need to enlighten you about what real life is like.

Athena attended a predominantly White high school, and she was in the gifted and talented program. Like the other adult participants in this study, she was one of very few Blacks in her gifted and talented classes. Athena's grandmother routinely bragged to family and friends about her always being on the honor roll and being smart. Athena recalled her grandmother talking with her on multiple occasions about race and high achievement in high school, and what academic achievement could mean to her life's

ambitions. Her grandmother would reinforce with her time and again that she was as good, and as smart, as the White kids in her school:

That was pretty much her thing. ‘You’re as smart as they are,’ my grandmother would say. She said ‘we got people that are doctors and lawyers in the family. You have cousins that own their own businesses. You can do whatever you want to do. You’re just as good as White people.’

Athena’s grandmother also had no hesitation about going to visit her high school if she reported anything to her that was amiss. She said, “My grandmother would immediately visit my school if she didn’t like something.” Athena recalled that a White teacher purposely kicked her in the back when she was just in the first grade. After telling her what happened, Athena’s grandmother stormed into the school’s front office and demanded to see the principal and demanded that the teacher apologize. The teacher apologized and said that it had been an accident, but Athena’s grandmother made it clear that if another so called “accident” like that ever occurred again she would sue. This was in the 1960s. Athena’s grandmother would repeat this story to her over and over, as well as to other relatives. She also didn’t have a problem visiting Athena’s schools if she had any questions about what her granddaughter was learning, or how lessons were being taught. Athena said, “My grandmother always made her opinions known at my school, and if she sensed that something needed changing, she would push for it.” She was a strong woman with strong opinions about how her granddaughter was going to be treated and educated, and she demanded that teachers, administrators, and especially the school’s principal knew exactly where she was coming from in looking out for her granddaughter’s best interests. Athena said, “In high school I would cringe about my

grandmother's sudden appearances at school on my behalf, but looking back as an adult I am grateful for what she did." Athena respected having had her grandmother's protective presence in her life at a time when racism both in and outside of school settings was not subtle.

### **Adam Anderson**

Adam grew up in the northeast. His first neighborhood was predominantly Black, but the second neighborhood where he attended high school was predominantly White. His mother, a single parent, raised nine boys and two girls. Eleven children and one adult parent all lived under one roof. Adam's father did not live in the home, however he provided financial support, and he was a presence in Adam's life. Adam's mother, who was busy with all eleven children, all of the time, did actively support Adam in getting his high school education and then going on to college. He remembered his mother urging him to take all of the classes that he needed to get his high school diploma. Adam's mother also took the time to consistently visit his guidance counselor during open house opportunities at the school. She checked in with the high school guidance counselor to monitor Adam's academic progress:

It wasn't like my parents pounded it into us, but we all went on to finish high school and attended college. I got my associate's degree. Most of my friends quit high school though. Whenever the school had open house, my mom came every time. My mother visited my guidance counselor about my grades and everything. When the counselor said I would graduate, my mom grabbed me and hugged and kissed me. She was so happy. I mean, I was running around with my friends in the streets a lot, but I stayed in school.

Adam said, "I experienced more racism in the neighborhood than in high school." The majority of the study participants also spoke about the importance of parents and older family members talking with them often about understanding that racism could occur outside of classrooms as well as inside or outside of school. Adam moved to a predominantly White neighborhood where he attended high school in the 1980s. This is where he recalled first experiencing fear due to his race.

When we moved there we heard about burning crosses on front lawns and trying to force Blacks out of that neighborhood. There was a nearby park that Blacks could not go to without being in serious danger. I remember my history teacher who was White saying, 'We have some racial history right here that we need to work on.' And he and several teachers marched around that park holding signs. Some in the neighborhood threw bottles and yelled that they could march all they wanted to. Nothing changed. That park is still segregated.

Racism impacted Adam's adolescent experiences and unsettled him regarding the pervasive oppressiveness of intolerance in his community. He said, "I was shocked by the racism of the adults in the neighborhood who were a bigger problem than my classmates." Yet, even White students that he considered to be his friends at school told him that the racial problems, violence, and neighborhood tensions existed because of what Blacks had done. "They told me that Blacks had moved onto their turf and were soiling it with their presence, and Whites were angry." Adam added, "It still amazes me that White schoolmates, who laughed and joked with me all day long at school, believed that I was not equal to them," and that his family was contaminating and ruining the

neighborhood. What Adam developed from his experiences as an adolescent inadvertently helped him to develop a strong racial identity as an adult and a keenly critical ability to dismiss racism directed his way. All of the participants in this study articulated learning as teens that they, like Adam, continuously work to compartmentalize racism they experience by working at resiliently rebounding from it, and adapting their behaviors and responses to negotiating it.

### **Draco Diamond**

Draco, a 47 year old businessman, has been married to Diana, 46, a public school clerk, for 23 years. They have two children. They both each have a bachelor's degree and a combined family income of over \$90,000 annually. They own a five bedroom, 2.5 bath home in a subdivision of similar size homes in the \$200,000 price range. Their daughter Desiree, who is their youngest child, is a 17 year old gifted identified student who is also a high achiever taking several AP classes. Desiree also attends the neighborhood high school.

Draco's father was the superintendent of schools in the small community where he grew up, and his mother was the high school librarian. Although the school system located in rural Virginia was very small, his family's status in the community was significant due to his parents' high profile, professional affiliation within it. Draco was in gifted education classes in high school. He graduated 11<sup>th</sup> in his class. Although the community's high school was predominantly Black, the majority of his classmates and gifted education teachers were White. Draco, the superintendant's son, and a gifted student as mentioned, still perceived himself as an outsider in his high school, and a

target for discipline by teachers and staff, despite his father's and his mother's powerful insider positions and status:

The Black teachers were supportive. There was some animosity though from a few of the White teachers. They said 'he's Mr. Diamond's son' so I was singled out. I attributed the harsh repercussions that I received for being late to class once, and not turning in a homework assignment once, to my dad being their boss. It really bothered me. Later on I thought it was probably due to race.

Draco talked about not fully grasping, at the time, the impact of his parents' powerful insider status within the school system, nor the impact that may have had, as well as his race, on some of his high school experiences. He said, "I was afraid to tell my parents about my feelings about how race was affecting me at school." He added, "I still didn't know why I was so afraid to tell them anything." His parents simply got after him about not getting his work done. Draco believed that his parents could not have imagined that some teachers may have been motivated to single their son out for discipline due to anything other than his occasionally lax work ethic. He recalled several White teachers' vocally negative comments directed towards him that he heard just before he made it into the National Honor Society:

I was so young. It was my fault for being tardy, or talking too much in class, or not always turning in my work. But this, this was normal behavior for other high school kids. I remember some of the White teachers saying 'that's the guy's son...write him up,' and they would write me up for really small things. When I was getting into the Honor Society I also overheard a few White teachers throw

shots at me like, ‘I don’t think he’ll make it’ and ‘he’s not motivated.’ The Black teachers in contrast, let me know that they wanted me to excel.

A small group of Black teachers at the high school supported Draco. “I knew it because they each separately told me so.” He said, “I appreciated and was grateful for their belief in me when I really needed it.” Draco recalled that his parents insisted that he do well in school, and that he had worked hard at that for the most part. In regards to any family discussions about race though, Draco recalled that his parents’ most frequent talks with him were connected to sportsmanlike behavior. Draco played both football and basketball:

I played sports a lot, and I recall specifically that my parents said to always play it cool, and don’t embarrass us or anything. Regarding race, they told me to be aware of my behavior and don’t get caught up in acting foolish out there on the field or court. Just play the game.

Draco learned most about experiences with race and achievement in high school from his parents was focused more on his behavior. Their talks focused how he behaved during extracurricular activities, more so than what went on in the classroom. He said, “Keeping a cool head on the playing field was significant to winning and being a good sport,” and his well educated parents emphasized that.

### **Diana Diamond**

Diana was also raised in Virginia however, she and Draco are from two different rural communities, and they attended different high schools. Diana grew up in a home with her grandfather and an aunt, not her parents. Her grandfather was a farmer with little formal education. Diana’s high school was integrated and predominantly Black.

She, like her husband, was also a gifted identified high school student with few Blacks in her advanced classes. She too was an honor graduate:

My grandfather was a farmer, and he had ten children. He believed the children were helpers on the farm. During harvest season he would pull his own kids out of school to work the farm. He learned the value of an education later in life. I was his second opportunity to get this right with a child. He came to believe that a high school education could make a difference, and that it was of high value.

A strong work ethic learned at home dominated Diana's life. Diana grew up an only child. Her grandfather and aunt encouraged her to finish high school. But, Diana had bigger hopes and dreams. She had two much older cousins who lived just down the street from her grandfather's house, and she was very close to them. The cousins had both gone on to attend and graduate from college. She looked at them as role models, and she decided that if they could graduate from college, so could she:

Cousins are important in my family. Two lived near me. One was the high school valedictorian, and the other was as the salutatorian. They both went on to attend and graduate from college. I remember thinking, 'If they can do that I can too.' I had role models. I knew I could do it. I didn't just give 100% to a task. I gave 110% to accomplish the same things my White counterparts did. My grandfather and aunt were very clear. 'You are not the same, you have to be better because it's not a level playing field,' they would say.

Like the majority of the participants in this study, Diana regularly heard the same message from her grandfather and aunt about having to do a lot more, and a lot better in high school than her White contemporaries to remain competitive. Diana said, "My

guidance counselor provided information about going to college and the college application process.” He was quite helpful, but he also tried to put a roadblock in front of Diana that she clearly recalled:

My high school guidance counselor let us to hang out in his office. He had college brochures that we read. He gave me information about different colleges. One of the interesting things the counselor said when I told him where I wanted to go to college was that he thought I would not get into the two competitive schools that I selected. I didn’t care what he said. I applied anyway. I was really happy to be able to report to him that I had been accepted to both colleges.

Despite the high school guidance counselor’s pessimistic, unsupportive response to Diana about the colleges that she intended to apply to, she ignored the potential roadblock comment that he had made and applied. But she still remembered what he’d said. She also went on to use the counselor’s professional knowledge and resources about the college application process. She said, “I think my confident response to that guidance counselor was because of long talks about my achievement abilities with my grandfather and aunt well before that guidance counselor came into my life.”

### **Halle Harlowe**

Halle Harlowe is a 57 year old single parent. She has one child, a daughter, Harmony Harlowe. Halle is a customer service manager. She has an associate’s degree, and three years of college towards a bachelor’s degree. She earns an annual income of between \$50,000- \$69,000. She owns a three bedroom, two bath home in a subdivision of similar single family homes in the \$200,000 price range. Her daughter Harmony, a 17

year old gifted identified student who is a high academic achiever, takes several AP classes. Harmony also attends the neighborhood high school.

Halle grew up poor in a bleak Midwestern factory town in Illinois with few professional prospects outside of working in a factory. Halle and her three siblings lived with both parents. There were half a dozen factories near the predominantly White community where the family resided. Although her town was integrated by the time Halle was growing up, and she could go anywhere that she wanted to, she saw old signs still posted around town in public places like bathrooms that she remembers read, "Whites only." Halle vividly recalled that her high school was 90% White, 8% Black and 2% Latino/Hispanic. Halle, the oldest child, was the first in her entire family to go to college, and she reflected upon her parents' attitudes. She said, "My parents were not supportive of my college or career aspirations." Her mother and father repeatedly told her that she had no future outside of working a menial factory job like they did:

My dad said to me one day that people who were doing things like what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was doing just caused problems. He said, 'He's causing trouble! He's just causing trouble.' And I said, 'He's trying to make things better for everybody.' I didn't know why my father said that. He often said that Whites were not going to let Blacks achieve or do well. I didn't argue with him any further. I knew he was afraid, but he never would tell me why.

Halle said, "When my parents were telling me I had no future beyond the factories, I did not immediately understand the tremendous fear they had of White people because of racism." She discovered later on as an adult that their experiences were so traumatic that they could not even bring themselves to really talk about them with her. Their fear was

profound though. “Fear had damaged them and the ways that they communicated with me when I was growing up,” she said. Halle added, “Once I was accepted into college though, I was surprised by my parents’ reaction. They were incredibly proud and supportive of me then.”

Halle’s strongest role models in high school, regarding what academic achievement could mean to her life, came from role models other than her parents. Halle watched Black people closely who were on television and who were doing the things that she was interested in doing. She used the Black achievers and leaders she saw on TV to motivate her to do well in high school and go on to college:

I saw different things on TV. I knew where I was living, and that what people in my town were doing was not the same as what I saw on TV. I figured out that it boiled down to education and following dreams. I didn’t know that I would be by myself doing that, but I was going to do it.

In addition, two African American high school teachers were instrumental role models for her in high school. She described being fortunate to have had two Black teachers who cared about her future:

There was a Black woman teacher, and I loved her. There was also a Black gentleman teacher as well. They were both really great educators. Through those two teachers I learned that I could actually do something other than work in a factory. They gave me something invaluable. They gave me hope.

Halle marveled at the fact that these two teachers left the school just two years after teaching at her high school, but that their impression was a long lasting one for her. Halle’s teachers, counselors, and other adults at school impacted her by modeling and

discussing with her the potential benefits of high achievement that her parents simply could not. Halle's experiences with her parents' lack of support for her academic achievement in high school are very different from the other parents in this study. Yet, her exposure to information about what could be achieved through educational attainment, and the support and encouragement of educators in her high school, resonated with her and helped her to construct a positive and resilient, self identity.

### **Giselle Gavin**

Giselle Gavin is a 46 year old single parent. She has one child, a son, Gray Gavin. Giselle is an Instructional Design/Tech Specialist. She is the sole participant in this study with a master's degree. She earns an annual income of between \$70,000- \$89,000. She owns a four bedroom, four bath home in a subdivision of homes ranging from \$250,000 to half a million dollars. Her son Gray, a 17 year old gifted identified student who is a high academic achiever, takes several AP classes. Gray also attends the neighborhood high school.

Giselle grew up in an upscale, White, middle class, suburban neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. She is the oldest in a family of three girls. Her family was the only Black family in the neighborhood at the time that she was growing up, and they lived in one of the largest, most expensive homes. Her father and mother both had bachelor's degrees, and her mother has a master's degree and is a retired elementary school teacher. Her father was a Public Relations Manager for a utility company, and a respected church minister. Giselle said, "My family has several generations of college educated professionals." Giselle also told me almost immediately, "I experienced racism at school at a very, very young age, and it was horrible." Giselle experienced racism from first to

third grade that ultimately compelled her parents to move her to the elementary school where her mother was a teacher. Her experiences in elementary school so traumatized her that the memories are still fresh and frightening:

In elementary school in the first grade in the 1970s, I was the only Black student in my school. I was called the ‘n’ word and spit on. I asked my parents, what that word meant and why the children were mad at me. I was only seven years old then. My parents thought their cruelty would stop, but the slurs continued in second and third grade. I was also not treated well by teachers. Things got worse, and my mom was in the school system! She, nor my dad, thought parents would encourage their kids to harm a child in class. My parents finally took me out of there and let me go to the school where my mother taught.

When Giselle talked about her experiences in elementary school, her voice quickly became higher and sharper, and she unintentionally clenched and unclenched her hands and fingers, and sped through retelling the painful childhood accounts of racism she experienced. “With the shelter of my mother’s presence I found my footing at her school. However, my eyes were wide open forever to the terror one could experience at any age, at any time, and in any situation, due to racism.”

Giselle’s high school was 1/3 Black, 1/3 White and 1/3 Latino/Hispanic, which was quite a change from her earlier schooling experience. She recalled that the demographic makeup of her high school was purposely shaped by the public school system to comply with desegregation law, and to foster integration. High school was better for Halle. She said, “the environment was welcoming to African Americans and I don’t remember overtly ill treatment due to race in high school like I had experienced in

elementary school.” She was not isolated, or singled out, or tormented. There was a large group of Black students. Giselle was by choice not in the gifted education program in high school, but her sisters were. She recalled that her parents and extended family members motivated them both to do well academically:

My parents motivated me to do well in high school. There was always motivation at home. My sisters and I always knew that we were going to college. Both of my parents have degrees. So, there was never the idea, or conversation, that we weren’t going to college. What we talked about was *which* college we were going to attend. It was never *are* we going, but where.

Like the majority of the participants in this study, family conversations led by her parents about college were not characterized as suggesting that college was an option. College was a topic of conversation in Giselle’s family with an intensity that a degree was a necessity, a requirement, for helping to maintain or improve upon one’s financial, career, and social class status. And, Giselle described herself as being very highly motivated to earn money. In fact, she was accepted into a special work study program through her high school:

I got the job through my school, and I was paid cash. I loved it. I worked for the Federal Reserve Bank and earned high school credit, as well as a paycheck. I worked with monetary publications. I had an office. I had a real job, and an office. Later on this looked very good on my resume.

Giselle’s experiences with overt racism in school at a very young age were devastating, but her parents nurtured her resilience. She said, “My experiences in elementary school came very close to ruining my interest in ever going to school.” With

her parents' support, intervention, and encouragement however, her schooling experiences in high school took a decidedly different and dramatically positive turn. The support of her parents helped her to move forward in her educational and professional pursuits. She, like all of the participants in this study, developed a strong racial self concept, and the ability to resiliently adapt in racially challenging contexts as an adult.

### **Participant Profile Summary**

The participants' profiles provide background about the lived experiences of the eight adults taking part in this study. Differences of the participants include that they come from different parts of the country, grew up in rural, suburban, or urban communities, and were not all "parented" by parents. Some were parented by grandparents, much older siblings, or aunts or uncles. Five participants graduated from predominantly White high schools, two graduated from predominantly Black high schools and one graduated from a high school where Black, White, and Hispanic students each equally represented one third of the school's student population. Five of the participants were raised in two parent households, and three were not. The occupations that study participants have are very different from one another. One participant in this study is a teacher. Another is the son of a school superintendent. One is an engineer. And another is an Education Media Technology and Design Specialist.

Commonalities are that each participant has an adolescent child who is in the gifted and talented education program, each adolescent has an above average grade point average, and each adolescent took at least one AP course, and passed a national AP exam. Other commonalities include that all of the participants attended integrated high schools, and all eight have college experience. Two have associate's degrees, five have bachelor's

degrees, and one has a master's degree. Five of the eight study participants self identify as having been in gifted and talented or academically accelerated academic programs when they were in high school. The participants who were in gifted and talented programs when they were adolescents were all in classes with mostly White teachers and classmates. And the majority of the adult participants were also quite vocal about having been dedicated, high achieving students in high school.

The study participants' profiles, although very different have also painted a picture for the reader of top-of-mind dispositions regarding strong racial self-concepts characterized by strong senses of purpose and resilience regarding racism. The participants' profiles provide rich description for readers about what was shared with them when they were adolescents, and that this may help to inform their perspectives about what they shared with their own children about above average academic achievement as racism resistant. The participants' profiles also reveal a level of resilience, perseverance, patience, and awareness in them regarding academic achievement, social class, and race when they were in high school. Study themes and subthemes corresponding with the three research questions guiding this study are discussed in Chapter 5. Findings and analysis are explained in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

Qualitative research on Black, middle class parents of above average, adolescent, academic achievers can inform scholarship about powerful parenting, social class, and minority academic achievement. Research examining Black, middle class parents' purposeful interactions with their adolescents that work to enact a positive racial self identity, and a positive intellectual orientation, and that also work to provide them with social class advantages they would receive if they were White and middle class, is absent from the literature. There is abundant literature focused on low achievement and deficiency. Research on Black parents of above-average, academic achievers can critically and positively inform scholars and concerned actors about powerful parenting behaviors and academic achievement.

The purpose of this study was to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Three research questions guide this study:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?

3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

Overall findings appear in the Table 3, *Summary of Findings*. Findings themes and subthemes from the data that correspond with the three research questions guiding this study are presented.

The presentation of the data in Chapter 5 includes frequent quotes from the participants' narratives. Study participants report their stories themselves. Thick, rich, description of study participants' experiences is captured in the findings, and a careful, close analysis of what the participants related in their stories provides context. I present findings that the participants discussed that support high achievement, and help to mitigate racism. Study participants were very receptive about discussing the conversations and interactions that they engaged in with their adolescents regarding race, racism, social class, and academic achievement. Enacting a racism resistant, ideological perspective in adolescents that helps to sustain above average academic achievement is, for the parents in this study, an active and deliberate process of hands-on, middle class parent involvement and engagement.

Table 3

*Summary of Findings*

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
RQ1: How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?	Understand that education impacts life quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life chances</li> <li>2. Career Uplift</li> <li>3. Social class status</li> </ol>
RQ2: How do African American middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?	<p>Expect to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites</p> <p>Use available resources to support learning</p> <p>Understand the rewards of rigorous academic classes</p> <p>Engage in high expectation conversations at home</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being as smart</li> <li>2. Educator bias</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. System contacts</li> <li>2. School contacts</li> <li>3. Technology resources</li> </ol> <p>Gifted and Advanced Placement (AP) advantages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Frequent conversations</li> <li>2. Above average grades</li> <li>3. Grade checking</li> <li>4. Racism in and beyond the school setting</li> </ol>
RQ3: What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?	Network to enhance educational, racial and social class experiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Model networking</li> <li>2. Report on friendships in Gifted and AP</li> <li>3. Report racism experienced in Gifted and AP</li> </ol>

## **Findings Related to Research Question 1**

With the first research question, “How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?” this study reveals one major theme and three subthemes. The study indicates that education impacts one’s quality of life, which includes: (a) life chances, (b) career uplift, and (c) social class status. This section describes each in detail.

### **Understand that Education Impacts Life Quality**

The first major theme that addresses research question one in this qualitative study is that education impacts life quality. Emanating from the study participants’ stories was that they view education as essential and fundamental to creating and sustaining a good life quality. Good life quality is characterized in this study as rewarding and valued personally and professionally. The participants closely align impacting life quality, in part through educational achievement, and that this perspective was also routinely shared at home with them by their own parents when they were adolescents. However, the parents in this study also taught their offspring to understand that societal racism can potentially impact their life quality in negative ways. Study participant Athena Anderson said:

My son knows racism exists. I have told him, ‘Some White people will unfortunately only like you and socialize with you because they view you as an asset. You are a very smart and educated Black person. You’re well-rounded. You’re not a trouble maker. Had you not been all of that, then they would not let their kids associate with you. You gotta do what you gotta do to achieve, but we want you to be comfortable in your skin with who you are.’

Social cultural capital represented by the White majority carries privilege in American society, and is acceptable and highly desirable. Social cultural capital is reflected in the behaviors, practices, and traditions valued by the dominant culture. Systemic racism is a dynamic that has compelled the Black, middle class parents in this study to teach their adolescents what is culturally acceptable to the White majority, but also what supports a critically attuned outlook on life and identity as a Black person despite societal forces. These parents have talked frequently with their adolescents about their academic and personal strengths and being self-accepting. In addition, they teach their adolescents to be watchful and wary of racism. These parents say that sharing their views help to support a rationale for their adolescents to sustain above average academic achievement, and its impact on life quality. Study participant Giselle Gavin said she has often had heated discussions about race and achievement tied to life quality with her son Gray:

For Black people academic achievement success is imperative. I also believe and share with Gray that society routinely discards people of color because of race. I say this often and very loudly to my son. I have also worked hard to nurture self-confidence and self-acceptance in him, his culture, and who he is, and who he belongs to.

Giselle went on to explain to me that:

Some White parents have actually expressed shock and surprise when they have asked me, and I have told them, that Gray is in gifted education classes. I have had parents question me. It's a racist conversation, in my opinion, to find out where he is at school in terms of his academic performance in relationship to their

kids. They try to classify Gray and put him in a box. I know exactly where their kids are though. They're sitting right next to Gray in the gifted class!

Claire Clarke said:

Chase understands from us that as a Black person they expect him to do less.

They don't expect your kids to excel.

Giselle Gavin also shared with me that she was taught by her parents the importance of high achievement in school tied to life quality, and that she shares this value with her son.

She said:

You need to do better because your academic achievement can put you in a better position to determine the kinds of things you want to do in life. My father saw race, but he felt there were ways to work around it through effort and hard work.

This study's participants incorporate into the discussions with their adolescents the necessity of high achievement for Blacks both in and beyond the classroom. They plainly and frequently talk with their adolescents about educational achievement working to mitigate racism. Study participants, although middle class also know that they are not shielded from racism by social class. This is not a secret. Nor are they deluded into believing that racism won't touch their children. Study participant Chad Clarke said:

Today we don't see mass violence like the lynching and beating that occurred in the past, but there is definitely racism today. It is not overt though. It's different. I talk with White guys on my job all the time, and all of us move around the country a lot... My wife and I tell our kids that it's no secret that Black families have a tougher time getting a mortgage loan than White families. You might not get one, or we'll pay a much higher interest rate. It's also harder to buy a vehicle.

We are looked at differently when we walk onto a new car lot, and we also wind up paying more. Just getting a job is harder too. Things are not equal for people of color in any age group, or on any social level.

The parents in this study view the task of teaching their adolescents to be watchful, vigilant and not accepting of the inequities that racism presents is up to them. Racism, for the study participants, impacts Black life no matter what the social class; it is necessary to teach their adolescents strategies to not only survive it, but to thrive in spite of it.

**Life chances.** Research question one asks how African American parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology resistant to racism. Seven of the eight participants in this study heard the message repeated at home by their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings and cousins that academic achievement in high school was required of them to impact their life chances. Life chances are characterized in this study as opportunities. Opportunities, as viewed by the parents in this qualitative study, lead to options and options lead to chances - life chances. The life chances subtheme is all about sharing the perspective that by enhancing opportunities through academic success, adolescents can impact future aspirations. Athena Anderson said:

In high school I was a cheerleader and I ran track. I also sang in the chorus. Most importantly, I got great grades. I was so into school! I was offered lots of college scholarships. I was taught at home that getting a good education was a necessity. I was taught by my family that in life if I wanted something bad enough, I had to work really hard in all areas to get it.

**Career uplift.** The second subtheme of career uplift, i.e., enhancing career opportunities through academic achievement was shared by the study participants with their offspring. This study's participants view educational achievement as a primary vehicle to increase and improve career opportunities and career advancement. Seven of the eight participants' own parents also taught them that life quality could be impacted through academic achievement, as well as the kind of career that one could attain and expect. Study participant Athena Anderson explained that her grandmother routinely told her, "I could do anything that I wanted to do that I put my mind to do. Realizing my long term goals and dreams later was always connected to my academic achievement in high school, my grandmother said," and Athena shares this view with her son Atlas. Sharing the view that career opportunities, options, and choices are significantly impacted by academic achievement in high school in the long term was a view shared by the grandparents, to the parents, and to the adolescents, by the majority of this study's participants.

As first stated in Chapter 4 in this study, Chad Clarke's parents were farmers by trade and had not graduated from high school. They did not want that life for Chad. Chad's parents believed that education was a means of uplifting his career prospects. They, and his extended family, expected nothing less of Chad than high achievement in his gifted education classes. Subtheme two, career uplift, is the vision that Chad's parents shared with him for his life. Chad's parents saw the value of college to others' in the family, following high school, in respect to their financial and career statuses as adults. Chad's parents also taught him to be cautious and careful around the White students in his high school classes. His parents believed that he could be killed because of his skin

color if he said or did the wrong thing around them. They were terrified for their son's safety due to their experiences seeing overt racism when they were growing up. Thus, the pressure was intense for Chad to academically achieve, and to understand that his academic achievement could profoundly impact his life quality. Chad said, "They put a tremendous burden on my older brother and I to do well in school... there was not an option not to do well." Chad's parents wanted him to have a lucrative career. From their perspective, education was a key feature of career uplift. He felt pressure to excel from elementary school all the way through middle school, high school and college. Chad said, "I successfully dealt with the pressure to achieve because of my parents' support and goals for me." Their high expectations motivated him. Chad's parents supported him academically, and also cautioned him socio-culturally. Chad said, "Today, we're still fighting the ancestor of old Jim Crow that exists in all institutions and definitely in high schools and colleges." Chad believes the extreme violence due to race during his parents' day has significantly diminished, but that it is necessary to explain to his children that race still matters, that racism exists, and that academic achievement can work to alleviate it. The parents in this study continuously shared and share with their adolescents that a high quality high school education supports skill development to achieve college goals that eventually can impact career uplift.

**Social Class Status.** Claire Clarke's parents also did not have college degrees, but both had white collar jobs that paid living wages. Claire's parents experienced intense racial hostility from White coworkers and also socially, they felt, because they were not college educated, and they were determined to see to it that their daughter did not go through the same experience. Subtheme three, impacting social class status through

educational achievement, was shared by parents in this study with their adolescents. There are privileges associated with social class status that impact life quality. Claire Clarke's parents told her repeatedly, from a very young age, "You are going to college." There was never something suggested other than going to college. Her parents also insisted that she take the gifted and talented classes in her high school that she was qualified to take due to exemplary test scores and grades. Her parents wanted her to be prepared to go to college. Claire said, "My parents often told me that their experiences working in white collar jobs had been socially bad without college degrees. It was very painful. They believed that more education meant that racism would be significantly diminished in my life." Claire added:

My parents talked about how hard it was for them without college degrees, and they strongly encouraged and motivated me academically. They were always in my corner to help me succeed and excel in high school. People were not only very racially prejudiced toward my parents, but they explained to me that not having college degrees was just another excuse to exclude them socially.

The parents in this study came to learn things about the significance of achievement in high school from their own parents and adult family members including that above average academic achievement for Black people could impact career opportunities, but could also impact social class advantage and status in ways that had the potential to impact and enhance life quality. In Claire's family, her parents had white collar jobs that provided living wages but they firmly believed, and shared with her, that not having college degrees had negatively impacted their life quality regarding their social class status. They wanted better than that for their daughter. Claire's parents shared

with her that college could provide opportunities for social advancement and thus provide her with valuable, prized, and respected social class capital that was, in their estimation, impossible to obtain without it. Claire said, "My parents believed you could only get so far in life without a college degree, and they did not want me to be deprived of anything."

The Black, middle class parents in this study learned from their parents and adult relatives when they were growing up, that academic achievement is highly significant to life quality for Black people, and they shared this viewpoint with their own adolescents. The parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings and cousins in the majority of the study participants' lives shared with them that education impacts life quality, life chances, career, and valuable social capital advantage. The participants in turn shared this viewpoint with their adolescents. Theme one and its subthemes are important to understanding the ideological perspectives of this small group of African American, middle class parents of highly successful adolescent students, and the complex nature of teaching them that academic achievement can be racism resistant over a lifetime.

Chad Clarke shared that racial oppression in schools exists, but that it is far different today than in the past. Chad said:

I experienced racism from elementary school through high school. In college, I viewed the racial isolation I felt in that environment as representing a microcosm of society. My Black friends and I were treated like outsiders the entire time that we were there. We could not cross racial lines. Our son has experienced some racial isolation as well. My wife and I have told him it's always going to be your skin color that people notice first and not whether you're smart or not or whether

or not you are in AP or gifted. So, if being Black comes up as an issue at school, view it as that person's problem, not yours.

An argument offered by parents in this study is that today, racism in institutions is subtler and more nuanced, and thus more difficult to pin down and explain to kids. Draco Diamond said:

I didn't recognize that racism was likely at the root of how some White teachers treated me back in high school. In high school you are still very young. I can look back now and I get it, but at the time, no. I was hurt and confused though. I also didn't tell my parents.

However, Draco and the other parents in this study work at teaching and encouraging their adolescents to recognize it, report it, and as pointedly discussed by Chad Clarke, not to be undone by it.

### **Findings Related to Research Question 2**

For the second research question, "How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?" this study reveals four major themes each with subthemes. Each of these four themes has between one and four subthemes, which are described in detail in this section.

#### **Expect to Work Twice as Hard to Get Half as Far as Whites**

The first major theme addressing research question two that seven of the eight parents in this study shared with their adolescents is that they were and are expected to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites. Athena Anderson said:

I was always taught by my parents not to get by in school with 'A' grades in the easy classes because I wouldn't learn anything. You must push yourself to learn

more. So, I willingly took the toughest classes in high school, and excelled in those classes.

And Claire Clarke said:

My parents were preparing me for the real world. I attended mostly White schools, and my parents continuously told me that I had to do better than average. I had to achieve twice as much in my studies and grades as other kids.

The parents in this study heard the theme repeated by adults family members in their lives that it was not only necessary, but required that they work twice as hard academically to achieve because that's what it would take to meet or exceed the White kids in their classes. All eight parents have shared this view with their adolescents.

A dominant culture stereotype that the Black parents in this study perceive is that it is assumed that their children are not taught at home to work hard in school, avoid working hard in school, and even when they are convinced to work hard in school are intrinsically incapable of the highest levels of academic achievement. This runs counter to what the parents in this study have taught and are teaching their adolescents, and what their adolescents have accomplished. As initially discussed in Chapter 4, Halle Harlowe's daughter Harmony adopted a work ethic that included a personal goal of earning the highest grades out of all of the students in her advanced classes. Halle said, "Harmony has been told that she has to do ten times the work as classmates, and to do it exceptionally well."

**Being as smart.** Giselle Gavin recognized early that her son was gifted, and she knew that she would need to continuously foster in him the perspective that being academically gifted was an asset, even through the teen years. Subtheme one to the

major theme of expecting to work twice as hard to get half as far, in response to research question two, involved participants reassuring their adolescents that they are not only as smart as other gifted students in their classes, but that they were in AP and gifted classes among equals, not superiors. Giselle Gavin had this to say:

My son Gray was talking at length about Bill Gates and Microsoft back in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. He said that the kids looked at him like he was weird. I knew I had to quickly find a program where the kids were making the same types of observations as he did, and I did. Today he thinks of gifted education classes as 'normal,' and he is not intimidated at all by the students in class with him. He is confident about his intelligence, and he appreciates the interpersonal contact with his gifted peers.

Halle Harlowe also recognized that her daughter was gifted early on. She anticipated that daughter Harmony would highly achieve academically, but discussed with her the necessity of talking with mom should social problems arise with other students in class. She said, "I think we have been very lucky. There are very few Blacks in her gifted and AP classes, but the kids treat her like one of the gang. She feels most comfortable being around her gifted and AP classmates."

Giselle Gavin was relentlessly mentally abused by White classmates when she began the first grade in elementary school, until her parents took her out of the school three years later. She wanted none of that for her son. The Black, middle class parents in this study are very engaged and involved in protecting, shielding and supporting their academically talented adolescents from racism emanating from peers at school. They skillfully and composedly investigate not only the academic programs that they involve

their children in, but also their treatment by peers once in. These parents discuss with their adolescents that mal treatment by classmates is unacceptable. They advise their adolescents to report to them behavior by classmates that diminishes equitable participation in class.

**Educator bias.** Subtheme two to the major theme of expecting to work twice as hard to get half as far involved participants teaching adolescents to report potential educator bias. The parents in this study shared with their adolescents that a teacher, counselor, administrator, or other education professional, whose behavior toward them made them feel uncomfortable, singled out, or less than other students, was something that they would want to know. All of the parents in this study have taught their adolescents to report suspected or overt educator bias to them. Teaching adolescents to be vigilant and vocal about this is something that these parents share. As first mentioned in Chapter 4 in this study, Diana's school guidance counselor, a White man, flat out told her that she would not be accepted into the two highly competitive colleges to which she wanted to apply. Diana applied anyway, and was accepted to both. The first person that she showed her acceptance letters to at school was that guidance counselor. Diana's grandfather, aunt, and older cousins who were attending college when she was still in high school, taught her and modeled for her to forge ahead despite potential roadblocks to her education, and she did. Diana Diamond's own daughter, Desiree told her parents in her last year of middle school that she wanted to experience more challenging courses and teachers in high school, and that getting into the gifted education program, and taking AP classes were things that she wanted to do. Diana said:

Desiree told me that she was very concerned about teacher quality, and teachers' attitudes about teaching more than anything. On just one or two occasions since then she has reported a problem with a teacher. However, she has said, 'Don't contact my teachers. I can handle them.' And she really has. My husband and I have encouraged and nurtured that confident, independent streak in her.

Harmony Harlowe came home one day unsettled by how a teacher was communicating with her in a gifted class. Mom, Halle Harlowe quickly contacted the teacher, they met, and she learned that there were several other students who didn't understand that particular teacher's expectations. Halle said, "It appeared that my daughter, the only Black student in the class, was not being racially singled out by the teacher. I focused on different concerns from that point on."

The parents in this study share with their adolescents the expectation that if there is suspected covert or overt racial bias directed toward them in school by peers, or by education professionals, that they must report it to them, so that they can take appropriate action to stop it. The parents in this study view the treatment that their adolescents receive in the classroom and in school by their peers, as well as by education professionals, the adults who guide their academic experiences, is as integral to helping them reach their full academic potential as is course curriculum.

### **Use Available Resources to Support Learning**

The second major theme addressing research question two is that parents in this study use available resources to support adolescents' learning, such as school and system contacts. The parents in this study are comfortable drawing upon help from sources and

contacts in the local school, or in the larger school system to support their children's educational experiences. If resources or services are needed or wanted, middle class parents take opportunities to pursue education professionals who can help them.

Subtheme one, relative to the main theme of using available resources, involves parents making contact with system officials to gain access to information. Resources can include specialized academic programs such as the gifted and talented program. The Black parents in this study work at cultivating contacts to get at valuable information and to take advantage of it. The ways that middle class parents in general interact with and talk with teachers, administrators, counselors and other education professionals is compatible. Middle class parents are typically not intimidated by school professionals, and will make phone calls or visit the school and ask questions, and expect answers. Subtheme two, cultivating school contacts, is closely related to cultivating system contacts. System contacts generally provide big picture information, as opposed to grass roots, site-based information like school contacts do. Both types of contacts can be valuable to middle class parents in general, but for the Black, middle class parents in this study, using contacts is essential. Developing good contacts within the school and school system can be significant beyond high school. Cultivating good contacts can impact information the parents in this study learn about college admissions, college scholarships, college recommendations, and other indispensable kinds of information and resources that they need.

**System contacts.** Giselle Gavin felt that she had to do something to locate and get her son Gray into a special academic program. Gray was already far ahead of his classmates in kindergarten. Subtheme one, contacting the school system, is a strategy that

the parents in this study acknowledge has helped to support their children's achievement. Giselle explained that Gray would finish his work early in kindergarten, become bored, and then also become chatty. He was also starting to disrupt other students in the class. Giselle did not want him to lose momentum in his learning, nor become a target for discipline. She said, "I called that school system every week. They finally told me about a special, accelerated academic program and we put him in it immediately. It really worked out well." Two years later she heard about a possible academic magnet program being developed in the school system. She contacted the system again and found out about that system's gifted education magnet program. Giselle obtained a letter from her son Gray's principal to try to help get him into that. She said, "Gray then attended the gifted magnet school. I hated that he had to ride a bus for some distance, but I liked that program as well." Once that program was discontinued, she did more research on a variety of school systems and settled on the county where she currently resides. For Giselle, using available resources to support learning is using system contacts effectively and wisely to support her son's academic achievement.

**School contacts.** Blacks are not equitably represented in accelerated and advanced programs in public schools. Teacher, counselor, and administrator recommendations are often required to be screened and tested for gifted and talented programs and AP classes in systems across the country. The Black, middle class parents in this study did not each wait to be contacted by teachers, counselors, or administrators for recommendations, or for someone at school to suggest that the testing or screening process be initiated for their offspring to take part. The parents in this study were compelled to investigate. They contacted school personnel who led or coordinated

special, academic programs for program details. If a program looked like it might be of significant value for their adolescents, the parents in this study did not hesitate to request information about how to go about involving their offspring. Barriers were navigated by these parents. They did not, and do not, waste energy thinking about whether racism is in their way. They doggedly pursued information and they got it. They sought out the power brokers in schools, and they got results. Giselle Gavin also makes a point to personally visit and talk one-on-one with her son's teachers, the guidance counselor, and school administrators at the start of every school year to let them put a parent's face to a name that is connected to her son. Giselle Gavin views education professionals at the school and in the school system as invaluable resources to help her cultivate important insider information that she can utilize in myriad ways to support her son's academic achievement.

Adam Anderson grew up in a very large family. He said, "I grew up in a really busy house with nine girls and two boys. Mom often said I better finish high school and get a job." It made Adam happy that his mother made it her business to visit his high school guidance counselor to talk about his progress during every open house. He said, "My mom was the backbone of the house and she had to do everything." Adam said:

Parents were invited to attend Open House at my school, and even though there were so many of us kids at home, my mom really kept up with me. So when she got to the school on one of her visits, and the guidance counselor said, 'Oh, he's done well. He's getting his diploma.' She was so happy! I was really shocked that she was so happy.

Adam expressed pride in his mother's attention and concern about his schooling experiences. And this stuck with him as an adolescent. So, Adam has taken multiple opportunities to express to his son Atlas the importance of using high school to his benefit, and to learn as much as he can to prepare for college. Adam said, "Education is so important. That is why we try to instill in our son each day that he needs to get a good education." Atlas's mother was the parent in this couple who investigated getting her son tested for the gifted education program, and also signed up for AP classes. She, asked questions about rigorous academic programs and saw to it that her son was involved.

**Technology resources.** Subtheme three addresses the study participants' use of technology resources. The study participants frequently all use technology resources to learn about important information emanating from the school system and their children's high school. Diana Diamond and Giselle Gavin expressed that they frequently check web information for a variety of reasons, including their adolescents' academic progress. Diana said, "If I see anything totally out of the ordinary for my daughter's grades I ask her what happened, and we talk about what she can do if she has to make up an assignment." Giselle said, "I am aware of what is going on in school because my son's teachers send me emails and I read them regularly." These parents frequently check their adolescents' academic progress. This is high on the list of priorities to check. Achiever parents in this study check grades on a daily basis. Although checking grades is a high priority, these parents are also checking school and system website information. They learn about various school and system events and activities in this manner.

In addition to using the Internet to check up on grades and other kinds of information provided by schools and systems, middle class parents in general commonly

have the economic means to purchase different types of technology and equipment that adolescents are interested in using that can enhance learning experiences in and out of the classroom. Athena Anderson has bought all kinds of equipment and gadgets for her son.

Athena said:

Atlas recently became quite interested in making films. So we bought stuff for him, cameras, IPODs, and whatever else he needed to do what he thinks his passion is. We tell him not to work hard in school to just get a job, but to get a career. Life is for the living. If he wants to be a filmmaker, he should decide.

What Athena and Adam, and the parents in this study purposely share with their adolescents is an ideological perspective that connects educational achievement in high school to middle class advantages that can be attained in the form of access to greater diversity in one's college and career choices, greater access to state-of-the-art resources and technology, and greater access to social class advantages. These parents intend for their adolescents to go on to college, graduate, and be on a career and social trajectory to join the middle class or to exceed it. The participants teach their adolescents that some of the social class advantages that they can anticipate benefitting from through high academic achievement include greater economic freedom to do different things with their careers and their lives, including accessing and utilizing various technologies.

Technology use, per the parents in this study, can contribute to the process of supporting above average adolescent achievement. Parents Athena Anderson, Diana Diamond, and Giselle Gavin, and the other parents in this study, all perceive that the technology resources that they access help impact their adolescents' efforts to highly achieve. The adolescents in this study have observed their parents' proactive interactions

with schools and school systems, technology, and other resources and tools that can help to support an achievement ideology that is racism resistant.

### **Understand the Rewards of Rigorous Classes**

The third major theme that addresses research question two in this study is that this group of parents required their adolescents take rigorous classes in high school. Rigorous classes are academically demanding and challenging. Academically demanding or challenging classes, such as AP classes, are college level content classes taken in high school. In addition, gifted education classes are academically demanding, challenging and rigorous. The pace of instruction in gifted classes is significantly enhanced and accelerated, as is the depth and breadth of the information covered. Emanating from the study participants' stories was that the quality of the educational experiences of their adolescents is very, very important. Thus, gifted education and AP classes are viewed by these parents as being high in quality and significant to their children's learning. The study participants believe in helping their adolescents participate in AP and Gifted Education classrooms in high school to help impact long range and future goals specifically including going on to earn a college degree. Middle class parents in general want their children to get high paying, rewarding careers, and many view a college degree as a necessary tool to use to reach that goal. Experts in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are increasingly in great demand today in the private sector. The parents in this study want their adolescents to be well-equipped to enter college, and if they so choose can begin to pursue a degree in a high demand field. Chad said, "My son has technology, resources, and opportunities in high school that I

never had. I want him to do the best that he can while he is there in order to reap the benefits.”

The parents in this study actively and routinely, casually and calmly use talk with their adolescents to motivate and reassure them about their intellectual capabilities. Athena Anderson explained that she tells her son, Atlas, “If you want to live up to your full potential, you have to push yourself in school so you’re ready for the real world.” The study participants view those who are highly educated as possessing valuable insider knowledge and expertise that can be used to impact a host of things including careers, financial portfolios, social connections, and social status. They continuously pitch the benefits of educational achievement and attainment to their adolescents. Adam Anderson said, “My wife grew up around people who said the most important thing to them was education. They all thought this way.” Athena Anderson added, “I have told Atlas, ‘If you do the hard classes in high school, it won’t be as hard in college.’ This has made sense to him.” In doing so, these participants articulate that they are also providing strategies to help shield and buffer their son from racism. Adam, who earned a two year associate degree said:

My mom wanted me to get a four year degree. She tried to explain to me more than once that a four year degree was really important if I was interested in music management. Managers in the music business are predominantly White. I was in a really good band. I didn’t listen to what mom was saying at the time. Mom said she thought that our managers would just use us to perform, and take our money from us if I wasn’t more educated about the business side - which they did. My mom told me that to deal with racism and go far in the music business I should

have continued and gotten my four year degree. I know now that I should have listened. I often talk to Atlas about this regret about my education. They can't take it from you.

Athena Anderson views her son Adam's high school education as a significant investment in his future. This perspective was shared with Athena by her own mother and grandmother regarding her potential. Athena took her son to one of her college classes when he was in elementary school to unveil the college experience for him, to let him observe firsthand what distinguished college as a special place, and to see how and where learning takes place at college, all in an effort to satisfy his curiosity. She said:

Adam sat in a college class with me. He listened to the professor, and the professor talked with him directly and asked him questions. He was so excited. Adam also visited a dorm room. This experience was to expose him to what I was doing in college, what it was like, and what he had to do to in school in order to get into college when he was older.

Athena and Adam, like the other parents in this study, are very conscientious about what they model as important for Adam's learning. The parents in this study take time with their children to show, and not just tell them about, the benefits of academic achievement. They routinely expose their offspring to a variety of educational and social experiences, like Athena had.

**Gifted and advanced placement (AP) advantages.** The Black, middle class parents in this study talk with their adolescents about the advantages of taking AP and Gifted Education classes. These parents strongly support AP and Gifted Education; they compel their adolescents to take these academically rigorous classes to work at reaching

their full academic potential in high school, and to be well prepared for college. Opportunities that high achievers are offered and can take advantage of who are successful on national AP exams taken in high school can be extensive. Competitive colleges, college contacts, college scholarships, internships and other significant career and social benefits become accessible. Competitive colleges across the country reward students with academic credit toward earning college degrees with high scores earned on national AP tests in high school. In addition, a growing academic focus across the country on student preparedness in advanced STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) areas support a society that is increasingly becoming more competitively and economically driven by advanced technology. The parents in this study look at above average academic achievement in rigorous AP and Gifted Education classes as necessary and doable, and key to opportunities for their adolescents to jump onto career paths in college that are in demand. Athena Anderson said:

We want Atlas to be prepared to do whatever he wants to do professionally. Preparation in high school can prepare students for what comes afterward with the right classes and teachers. Atlas is going to college. AP classes prepare students for college. We want him to have choices about what he wants to pursue in college, and that takes being prepared going in. I have constantly told Adam, 'You want to be paid as an adult for something that you like to do, can do well, and are passionate about. That is a career, not a job. That's the best thing in life.'

The parents here believe that it is necessary to teach their gifted and talented adolescents that earning above average grades in AP and gifted classes is an achievable, sustainable thing, and that high achievement also helps to resist racism. White skin color

advantage in America is conferred at birth. Becoming well educated, per the parents in this study, is something Black people use to try to help resist racial disadvantage. Giselle Gavin said:

Parents influence their children. I have talked with my son about race and doing well in school, and in AP, and being a Black male. I have said to him, ‘you may even have all ‘As’ when a Caucasian male with blonde hair and blue eyes with a ‘C’ or ‘D’ grade average might still beat you out of a job. So, you have to always do your best in school and be the best prepared educationally.’ It is my strong belief, and I was taught, that Black people have to be well educated to catch breaks in life. We have generations of well educated, highly successful people in my family. When I was growing up I didn’t want to be the exception, I always wanted to be with the whole group, you know!

Giselle has frequently tried to make it clear to son Gray that attempting to level the playing field as a Black person takes being highly prepared and substantially equipped, educationally. A major part of that preparation, per this parent, includes taking academically rigorous and challenging classes in high school.

America has moved from an industrial society to a technology driven and focused one. Challenges in public education include professionally developing individuals to meet the needs of a continuously changing business landscape. In the industrial era there were opportunities for educated and talented individuals to contribute to vast and varied fields of endeavor. The parents in this study were taught this perspective, believe that education continues to have great value today, and share this with their children. Being afforded chances to reach one’s full potential educationally however, is at the core of

systemic racism. The African American, middle class parents in this study also know this, and teach their adolescents that talent emanates from high quality thinking, training, and learning, and that they must be successful in high school classes where the most rigorous educational preparation is taking place in an effort to remain competitive with their White peers.

### **Engage in High Expectation Conversations at Home**

The fourth major theme in this study is that the African American, middle class parents in this study have frequent high expectation talks with their academically gifted and talented adolescents. Research that is discussed in this study's Chapters 1 and 2 supports that middle class parents in general talk a lot with their children, and when they do they share a sense of entitlement to privileges and advantages that their social class affords. A subtheme is that the parents in this study have frequent conversations with their high achieving offspring, and in so doing teach them how to use social talk effectively with people in authority which includes school, but is not limited or restricted to school. The kind of talk used by the parents in this study helps to enact in their adolescents, an achievement ideology that is racism resistant. These parents' frequently discuss reasoning with those in authority to empower their adolescents to view others with power as approachable equals, and that negotiating on an equal footing with others is talk that they must learn and are supposed to do. For example, Halle Harlowe's daughter Harmony wants to pursue a professional acting career. She said, "Harmony wants to attend a respected university in England after high school to formally study acting. She has spoken several times with an academic advisor there already. She actually also found an acting agent on her own." Halle talks with Harmony frequently about

taking charge, and reaching her full potential both in and out of school, and this perspective supports this mother's enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology.

**Frequent conversations.** The parents in this study in particular encourage open dialogue with their adolescents that they are expected to earn above average grades in all of their classes in high school, including their AP and gifted education classes. This is a primary subtheme to the main theme of parents' having high expectation talks with their children. Diana Diamond had this to say:

In elementary school Desiree was tested for gifted education, but she didn't want to be in the program back then. A teacher recommended her again in middle school, and again she declined. She was making good grades, but was in classes that were not particularly challenging for her. However, right before she entered high school, her views changed dramatically. She asked us whether she could still be tested for the gifted education program, and she discussed with us then that she thought she needed a more challenging academic experience. We were very pleased that she came to this decision. Our talks with her over the years regarding our expectations of her regarding school, and what it could mean for her future had impact. And in high school she has earned the highest grade average that she has ever had, and she has been taking the most rigorous and challenging classes that she has ever taken.

Desiree, who started out as an elementary and middle school student who was reluctant to be in the gifted education program, was asked by her mother Diana at the end of eighth grade, "What makes you feel like gifted teachers can do something different or better for you than other teachers?" Diana said that Desiree replied that, "She wanted the best

teachers and not simply to pass classes, but to learn important information. This was eye opening." This is an example of the impact that these parents' frequent conversations about high academic expectations had on their daughter over time. Diana and Draco Diamond made room for their gifted and talented daughter to have a voice regarding her educational experience and achievement; these parents however, recognize the significance of their talks with her over time about the necessity of high achievement. Although Diana and Draco wanted their daughter to take part in the gifted education program early on in her educational experience, they continued to encourage her through frequent talks, to eventually come to realize the importance of taking rigorous classes and highly achieving in them. As a result, they have not struggled to motivate Desiree to earn above average grades and highly achieve in high school. Desiree wants high grades and she works hard for them.

Getting into a gifted education program or an AP class is just a first step, albeit a potentially difficult one for most Black adolescents across the country. Once in however, earning above average grades is very crucial, as is scoring well on the AP national exams to reap the greatest benefit. Academically gifted and talented kids who are in gifted classes are there because they have been tested and found to have the abilities needed to highly achieve, but putting their abilities to work is its own challenge. The parents in this study understand and share with their adolescents that there could be academic struggles from time to time, but that they should never give up trying. The parents in this study share that never giving up trying, or resilience, is important in helping to enact an achievement ideology that is racism resistant in their adolescents. The way that Draco and Diana Diamond support their daughter's resilience is in the daily, matter-of-fact

conversations that they have with Desiree about the tough classes that she is taking, and doing what needs to be done to stay successful. Diana said she is, “tuned into talking with Desiree about school, keeping up with her academic progress, and telling Desiree that maintaining high grades is quite simply her main job as a kid, and something that she is really good at.” She also explained that, “If I see something out of the ordinary, like a missing grade, I talk with her about it and help her get it straightened out.” Diana added, “I follow up with her to be sure things are okay.” Encouraging talk directed towards Desiree by her mother, and her father is the kind of talk that the parents in this study share with their adolescents to support a resilient attitude about maintaining above average academic achievement and resisting racism. Draco Diamond said, “I tell Desiree, ‘good job’ all of the time, and that she is doing great with her grades.”

**Above average grades.** Adam and Athena Anderson talk with their son about the necessity of high academic achievement. The parents in this study believe that above average grades are powerful, and Atlas has been taught by his parents to meet with teachers if he has questions about his grades. Athena said, “We decided long ago to encourage Atlas to be who he is, and if something’s not right in a class at school, not to go along with that. Question it!” Adam added that he frequently tells Atlas that, “There’s power in your voice, son.” Adam and Athena often converse with their son to reassure and support him and reinforce that their son is smart and savvy, and that his above average grades are strong evidence of that, and are no accident. The parents in this study work to enact an achievement ideology that helps to empower their adolescents to contest suspected problems or bias in grades. Giselle Gavin said, “I tell Gray that I am proud that he makes the grades that he is making, and that he works so hard at it.” Acknowledging

adolescents' high achievement is important to the parents in this study, as is encouraging them to speak confidently with teachers and other education powerbrokers when they have questions about grades. Claire Clarke said, "I am my son's loudest cheerleader. Chase very rarely gets frustrated by school, but when he does I talk with him, support him, and motivate him. He really appreciates the encouragement." Claire and Chad Clarke consistently let Chase know that he has their unconditional support. They believe in their son's ability to achieve, but do encourage him to discuss grade issues should they arise.

The parents in this study view their adolescents' power to sustain high achievement is in part sustained by their ability to make their voices heard. They encourage their offspring to communicate and express themselves well to others both in and out of gifted education, and AP classrooms. For these parents, this perspective also supports enacting in their adolescents an achievement ideology that is racism resistant. These parents view their adolescents' voices, at home, at school, and elsewhere, as providing opportunities for them to express their academic ambitions, goals and dreams, and to speak them into reality. This, in their view, impacts academic achievement and helps to resist racism. Adam Anderson said, "My son has been taught to be boisterous. He is not rude, but he has been taught to say what is on his mind. For a young Black male, this is really important." The parents in this study view adolescents' effective communication as a necessity to helping them to sustain high achievement. Effective communication is prized social capital needed to succeed and achieve according to these parents, and is an important part of nurturing an academic achievement ideology resistant to racism.

The majority of this study's participants had sons. The parents of sons in this study required them to be gifted tested, participate in the gifted education program, and also take AP classes. The parents of all three sons did not waiver in compelling their sons to subsequently be placed in gifted education classes despite their sons' initial reluctance. On the other hand, the parents of daughters in this study did not have to require their daughters to be gifted tested. Both daughters were gifted tested due to recommendations provided by their respective teachers. Both daughters also asked their parents to take AP classes. Black parents requiring that their sons be gifted tested, as opposed to Black daughters being identified by education professionals for gifted testing, is discussed in the Conclusions Chapter 6 of this dissertation. Regardless of gender though, once these adolescents made it into the gifted education program and were taking AP classes, the parents in this study clearly and definitively expected above average academic achievement from them all. The expectation of above average grades is subtheme two to parents requiring adolescents take rigorous classes, and is a common subtheme among all of the study's participants. Gray Gavin works hard, and his mother Giselle, keeps a watchful eye to be sure that he remains consistent in this. "Gray loves boasting to peers that he ranks higher than they do in school, and that he's in the gifted program." Athena Anderson is also watchful of her son Atlas's above average achievement. She said, "We've saved all of his certificates and awards and put them up on a wall. It's important to us. It's important." Athena and Adam are pleased to see and also to display the evidence of their son's academic achievement.

**Grade checking.** Subtheme three to the main theme of parents having high expectation talks with adolescents addresses the significance of parents' frequent grade

checking. The parents in this study use grade checking to initiate or compel discussion to motivate their adolescents, and to compel adolescents to ask for additional information about a grade or assignment from a teacher, or to check and see if their adolescent needs extra help. The parents in this study check grades frequently and ask adolescents questions about grades; this also supports sustaining high achievement.

Internet technology tools provided by the school system allow parents in this study unlimited access to their adolescents grades. Giselle Gavin is vigilant about making sure that Gray's grades do not slip below a 'B' in any of his class at any time. Giselle said, "I need to know and not find out at the last minute that he is not doing well." Giselle doesn't hesitate to contact a teacher if there are not many grades given by a teacher in a given semester, or anything else that she believes is unusual. She said that she has no problem asking a teacher, "It is ten weeks in and there are only two grades?" She follows up at school on what she believes is important to continuously support Gray's above average academic achievement. Athena Anderson said, "I am aware of what's going on in school because I go online regularly and check. I can say to Atlas, 'You have a test coming up. Do you need any help?' I talk to Atlas pretty much every day after I check online." In this study parents' view grade checking and continuous dialogue about what is happening in the schooling process with their adolescents as helping to enact a strong achievement ideology perspective in their adolescents.

**Racism in and beyond the school setting.** The Black, middle class parents in this study also are compelled to check for racism in and beyond school, and part of that involves teaching adolescents to report to them any suspected teacher bias, and if they suspect that their grades are being affected. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Halle

Harlowe talked about the meeting that she had with the gifted language arts teacher that her daughter was uncomfortable with. She also said, "I believe that I actually put that teacher at ease by talking with her. The meeting went better than I thought it could have. Was that teacher perfect? No, but not in the way I was afraid of." Halle had been concerned that there might be a racism issue regarding that teacher because of what her daughter had reported. She ultimately decided that it was the teacher's teaching style that needed negotiating. Parents in this study model for their adolescents that they use various means to uncover suspected racial issues that could thwart academic achievement including meeting with teachers, guidance counselors and school and system administrators, or talking with other parents, or using litigation if deemed necessary. The Black, middle class parents in this study show their adolescents that they check for fairness in teachers' grading procedures, and the quality of their adolescents' learning experiences. The parents in this study filter their observations regarding educational equity for their adolescents through the critical lens of race.

The major themes and subthemes that address research question two are evident throughout the data gathered in this study. The study participants are deliberate in their talks with their adolescents about their high achievement expectations of them. These parents communicate to their adolescents multiple reasons to highly achieve, and the necessity of achievement to preparation for careers of greatest interest. In addition, these parents have also shared their views with their adolescents about the significance of high quality education experiences to helping resist societal racism.

### **Findings Related to Research Question 3**

For the third research question, “What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?” this study reveals one major theme and three subthemes. The study indicates that networking enhances education, racial and social class experience, which involves that these parents model networking. It also involves adolescents being encouraged by these parents to: report on friendships in gifted and AP, and report on racism experienced in gifted education and AP. This section describes each in detail.

#### **Network to Enhance Educational, Racial and Social Class Experience**

The first major theme addressing research question three is that the parents in this study share with their adolescents that networking enhances educational, racial and social class experience. The parents in this study view the consequences of enacting an achievement ideology that is racism resistant in their adolescents as beneficial. The social connections and relationships that their adolescents have made are perceived by parents here as significant to sustaining above average academic achievement and racism resistance. These parents view developing relationships with others as an important consequence of enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology. Social connections and relationships are a central part of sustaining and exceeding middle class social class advantage and privilege. White people in the middle class are the beneficiaries of social class advantages and privileges. Black, Latino/Hispanic and Asian middle class people are also the beneficiaries of social class advantages and privileges. Yet, there are profound differences. As previously discussed, what has been argued as vastly different for Whites in the middle class is that powerful, unearned, social privileges and

advantages are automatically conferred on white skin. White people do not work for skin color privilege. It is a given. And it provides entrée into social and institutional networks of every ilk and stripe. Those in the middle class without white skin cannot, and do not, have skin color privilege. Like receiving a key to an exclusive, members only club at birth, white skin color has advantages. Networking with that skin color club key, is vastly different than networking without it. Those without white skin cannot outright own this key. Thus, African Americans in the middle class are not just obliged, but are fundamentally required to network, navigate, and negotiate with those within the club, with the objective of somehow squeezing through that exclusive club door. The parents in this study know the importance of networking with peers and others to impact present and future endeavors, and sharing this aspect of achievement ideology that is resistant to racism with their adolescents showcases an important consequence of enacting an achievement ideology that is racism resistant, found in the data in this study.

In addition, middle class parents use networking to problem solve quickly and efficiently, and they model this behavior for their adolescents. The parents in this study, like other parents in the middle class, cultivate a host of contacts, sources, and resources. What distinguishes this particular group of parents is the speed, resolve, and efficiency involved in their highly effective activation and use of networks should a problem develop in school for their high achieving adolescents. Athena Anderson said, “When Atlas says he needs my help, I’ll buy books for him or get a friend who is an expert to help him. I don’t have any problem getting resources for him.” These parents move really fast to help sustain their adolescents’ academic achievement. Making sure that action is

taken quickly, from identifying a problem to solving it, is of great importance to maintaining the momentum of academic achievement that is racism resistant.

**Model networking.** The first subtheme to using networking to enhance educational, racial and social class experience is that the parents in this study intentionally and purposely model networking strategies for their adolescents. Strategies that have worked for this group of African American parents are precise, effective and active. Being a parent who helps sustain adolescent academic achievement through active engagement requires not only discussing a problem or concern with an adolescent, but being equipped to help by taking swift action. Parents' swift actions to intervene can make all the difference in helping an adolescent not fall behind in a rigorous academic class. Falling behind in an accelerated class can quickly make all the difference in understanding a course and building the strong foundation of knowledge needed to continue to be successful and achieve. Parents of high achievers know this. What is also evident from these parents is that their adolescents know this. They have been taught by their parents to let them know as soon as a potential academic achievement issue arises. This is a consequence of enacting an achievement ideology found in this study. These parents did not, and do not, have to guess. Their adolescents have been taught and encouraged to talk with them about school. Adam and Athena Anderson's son Atlas quickly recognized that he did not understand some concepts in his statistics class. He told his mother and father right away. Athena said:

When Atlas started having problems with statistics, I told him, 'I don't understand statistics' which I hated with a passion. But I remembered my girlfriend, who is a college professor, has a son who is in college who loves math. He does math as a

hobby. That's his thing. So he and my son had a face-to-face meeting on the computer the same day. I had every piece of equipment at home to scan my son's homework and sent it to the young man. So they both viewed the work simultaneously and they talked back and forth about how to work out the problems. That helped out my son tremendously. I talk with my son every day about his progress at school, so I don't have any problem connecting him with resources that he needs for something. If he's asking me for help, I know he needs it.

Athena activated her social network fast when a schooling problem arose for her son that he made her aware of. She activated a highly skilled individual, through her contacts, to intervene and help support her son's academic achievement the same day that her son reported having difficulty. Athena did not wait until the next school day to try and contact the teacher. She felt that process might take too long. She actively worked to intervene to get results that day by using the experts that she knew in her social network, to address a potential problem really fast. Atlas had statistics homework that night that was due the next day and Athena did not want him to have to walk into that advanced math class unprepared, and as importantly, unskilled and likely defeated. Athena chose to use highly skilled contacts available to her family that very night, and the outcome was significant for Atlas and his ability to continue the momentum of sustained high achievement in that statistics class.

Halle Harlowe, whose daughter also had some math challenges, explained that she quickly intervened on her daughter's behalf through her social network. She found a tutor for her daughter, and he worked closely with Harmony throughout the school year

to help her master her learning in math. Research discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 in this study indicate that middle class parents use their financial and social assets to access various resources to help support adolescent learning. What is interesting about the parents in this study is that the tutors and professionals that they accessed were mostly relatives or friends. They did not use tutorial agencies if they did not have to, and not because of the expense. These parents had established relationships with professionals in a variety of fields. These parents looked for genuine, authentic support for their offspring. Genuine support is characterized as being not only skilled, but authentically interested in the care of these adolescents. The parents wanted those who were working with their adolescents to care about teaching them. Halle said:

My daughter needed some help in math last year. We actually go to church with a woman whose husband is a math tutor. We were able to get him to do math tutorial services for my daughter with him right away, and he didn't even charge us. We just fed him a little bit. My daughter asked for extra help from me, and at first I called around and there were several options I could have pursued, but he was there at the church, and we knew him. He got her through a difficult point.

Parents in this study are skilled at cultivating and also activating networks of skilled actors who have authentic, caring relationships with them, and they model this behavior for their offspring. In addition, these parents use their social networks very fast in the eventuality that their high achieving adolescents have a schooling issue that they can help to address. Sharing the ideological perspective that social networks are important allows adolescents to see the value of cultivating friends and associates in helping to sustain academic achievement that is racism resistant.

**Report on friendships in gifted and AP.** The second subtheme to using networking to enhance educational, racial and social class experience is that adolescents report on friendships in gifted and AP. Students attend the same classes and spend time together. The middle class parents in this study know that their adolescents socialize with White students in class, and outside of class and school as well. And the adult parents also socialize with White people. Middle class families live work, play and spend considerable amounts of time with middle class peers from diverse backgrounds. Schools, jobs, and middle class neighborhoods represent an array of people today from different cultural backgrounds. Draco Diamond, whose daughter Desiree is a scholar athlete, encourages her to build relationships with her peers from different backgrounds in and outside of the classroom. Draco explained to me that he has taught Desiree that “relationships are often just as important as talent in being included and respected.” Findings in this study indicate that the parents of high achievers believe that achievement is significant and necessary, but not enough. Draco’s support of his daughter’s achievement is through the lens of sports and sportsmanship. Desiree looks to her dad for coaching advice on and off the field. Draco explained:

When Desiree was in middle school she tried out for a recreational team against a White girl. All the girls, except Desiree, knew each other and were friends. There was a free throw challenge. My daughter made all but one free throw out of seven, and the other girl made only one. The team chose the girl they knew, not the best shooter. Since then my daughter has made it a point to bond with players. Draco and his wife Diana have taught their daughter Desiree to view the above incident as a teachable moment to use as a rationale for expanding one’s social network, to

support academic achievement. What these parents share is that social contacts are necessary. Having friends is important in helping to get what you want. For the middle class, it can be argued that networking is as critical to success as is achievement. People like to work with people that they feel that they know and can trust. Being in close quarters with peers in a classroom can open up opportunities to proactively network. Talking and interacting effectively with peers in AP and Gifted Education classrooms can generate invaluable social capital that the parents in this study view as important for their adolescents. Privileges and advantages are continuously shared among networks of middle class people. High quality contacts are most desirable in maintaining and achieving social class, career, and economic advantage and status.

The parents in this study also explained to their children that there may be challenges they may face in social situations when developing relationships with people from different cultures. They do not hide the potential difficulties of racism from them, and they model for him how to handle situations. Athena Anderson said:

My son, Atlas has a friend who is a girl. Her dad likes my son, as does her brother. They have even gone to church together several times. My son asked her brother one Sunday, where she was, and the brother said that she was with her mother because her mother did not want her hanging out with a Black person.

Now mind you, a few months later this woman invited us to her home for a barbecue. We told our son that we were going to that barbecue even though we knew how she felt. That family could be an asset to you, because we certainly are assets for them!

Athena and Adam Anderson, like the other parents in this study, understand that acquiring middle class advantages and privileges can be a wily process. Competition for jobs, careers, and social class status is vigorous among the ranks of the middle class. For African Americans facing continuous societal oppression due to racism, competition can be significantly challenging and difficult. Athena added, "Atlas knows racism exists, and that some will smile at you and like you because they feel you are an asset to their kids. You're educated and smart. Get what you can out of every relationship." This is not cynicism, but viewed by the African American parents of above average achievers in this study as utilizing personal strengths in the face of racial adversity.

**Report on racism experience in gifted and AP.** The third subtheme to using networking to enhance educational, racial and social class experience is that adolescents report on racism experienced in gifted and AP. Middle class parents teach their children to report on racism in school. They specifically teach their children to talk with them on a regular basis. Middle class parents teach their offspring that discussing what happens at school with them not only helps to monitor adolescents' academic progress, but helps to monitor their social progress and experiences with teachers and peers as well. Social progress and experiences at school impact an adolescent's power with adults, i.e., teachers, administrators, counselors and other education professionals. When a student converses with an adult authority figure in school this can be a powerful learning experience for an adolescent supported by the middle class expectation of receiving practical, useful feedback without fear of reprisal. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, middle class parents share an ideology with their offspring that includes developing the capacity to powerfully interact with adults and peers from positions of strength and voice.

This strength emanates from a middle class perspective of entitlement to privileged treatment supported by middle class social advantage. Middle class parents are apt to share this perspective with their offspring to equip them to become adept at discerning nuances involved in others' activating and using their power and privilege, as well as how to wield their own power. Yet, regular talks with adolescents inclusive of reporting and discussing overt or suspected racism experienced at school is however a distinctive feature of Black, middle class parent engagement.

The parents in this study encourage their adolescents to report on suspected or overt racism. Teaching Black adolescents to report back to them about racism is a task that no parent wants to do, but that the Black parents here perceive they have to do. It is necessary for these parents to equip their adolescents to recognize overt and covert racism, and to try to deal effectively with racism experienced at school from a position of strength. This can be both challenging and daunting. Middle class social privilege and advantage does not include black skin. Black skin in school settings, as in other institutions, is perceived as unfavorable. Those with black skin are marginalized and oppressed in schools, as is in part evident from the significantly inequitable representation of Blacks in academically rigorous, gifted education programs and AP courses across the country. Representation by Black students in AP and Gifted Education classrooms nationwide is deplorable, and racism has long been suspected. And, of the small number of Black students who actually make it into an AP course, most do not earn passing scores on the national AP tests. The Black parents in this study knew that their adolescents might likely be the only one, or one of just a few Blacks, in their AP and Gifted Education classrooms, and that their adolescents would need to be made aware of

the importance of reporting on racism should it arise in class. However, the parents in this study said that they expected their adolescents to report racism in school wherever it took place. Claire Clarke said, “You’re talking about AP, but it’ll be things that might be outside of the AP class, but still at school. You’ve got to talk with them about this early and continuously.” Chad Clarke nodded agreement and added:

Racism is different today. Yet, even though it’s 100% different from sixty years ago it’s still here. And it has the same consequence, which is inequality. We tell our kids it’s no secret that Black families have a tougher go of it to become middle class, or upper class. And we don’t really hear about the gifted students of color. The media always showcase the negatives. White student failure does exist, but we don’t hear about that day in and day out in the news. Every news story is about Black crime, and Black student dropout rates and school failure.

Conversations about racism can help kids of color know what to expect. Lets them know the world isn’t fair. So, my son Chase doesn’t get alarmed anymore. Our talks have helped him in school and in sports, I think. He says he can chalk things up to the fact that, ‘yup, my parents told me this could happen’ and then he keeps on moving forward.

Chase has been taught by his parents to view racism as the racist’s problem, not to let it interfere with his goals and dreams, and to use academic achievement to resist it.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Halle Harlowe helped her daughter freshman year when several of their conversations caused her concern about suspected racism her daughter might have been experiencing by the White teacher of her gifted language arts class:

I did go to the school to talk with my daughter's ninth grade language arts teacher early in the school year. I wanted to check up on why my daughter had expressed to me that she was uncomfortable and confused by this teacher. I suggested to the teacher that she give parents more materials and information on assignments to support her students. Afterward, the teacher shared instructions and expectations more explicitly through regular web posts. My child got through that class with the grade that I thought she deserved.

Halle Harlowe was able to quickly address a potential problem with her daughter's gifted education in ninth grade because her daughter reported problems to her, and early. Halle Harlowe was able to check for teacher racial bias, and also provided the teacher with proactive feedback supportive of her daughter's learning, as well as for the other parents of students in the class.

What is salient to the Black, middle class parents in this study is requiring their adolescents to regularly report back to them on their schooling experiences with adults, as well as peers, inclusive of overt, as well as suspected covert, racism. When Black adolescents are taught to report about their schooling experiences to parents, Black parents have opportunities to intervene in supportive ways. Black, middle class parents, like other middle class parents, are more likely to visit their child's school to intervene and advocate effectively on behalf of their adolescents because they communicate in ways that are the most socially compatible with the ways that people in powerful positions in institutions like schools communicate (Lareau, 2003). In this study, findings indicate that these parents do not view adolescents' reporting of overt or suspected racism as limited to AP or gifted education classrooms, and that teaching adolescents that

reporting back to parents about wherever it is suspected of being experienced is not only important, but necessary. Parents in this study support adolescents' behavior in reporting back to them in this regard as a significant consequence of enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology.

### **Chapter Summary**

Findings indicate that the parents participating in this study discuss race, class, and academic achievement often with their adolescents. Parents also described having discussions with adolescents about racism connected to schooling experiences, but not only at school. Diana Diamond said:

I remember talking openly with our daughter about racism during the Trayvon Martin trial. I think this was probably her first experience seeing racism in an overt capacity, even though it wasn't directly related to her. This was an eye opening experience for her and made her realize that there are folk out there that may look at her differently just because of the color of her skin.

The Diamond family was impacted by Trayvon Martin's death, and the family talked about it together. Diana believes that Desiree understands that racism exists, but also that it cannot rule her. Desiree sat riveted in front of the family's television and watched the news on the trial, and she was stunned by the trial's outcome. Diana said

Race is not something we teach her to use as a crutch or as an excuse, though. She has been taught that she will be respected for her hard work and the type of person that she is, and to rise above any ignorance about race.

The parents in this study work at balancing candid talk about racism with their adolescents to empower and prepare them to deal with it, yet at the same time do not

want to overwhelm them about it so that it does not cripple their ability and spirit to thrive and achieve.

Study participants reported frequent engagement with adolescents revolving around six major themes: (a) education impacts life quality; (b) expect to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites; (c) use available resources to support learning; (d) require adolescents take rigorous classes; (e) have high expectation talks with adolescents; and (f) network to enhance educational, racial and social class experience. Sixteen subthemes emerged within these six major themes. Salient to the parents in this study was Black, middle class parents actively using multiple means and methods to help support and encourage a racism resistant, achievement ideology in their adolescent offspring.

What resonates throughout the findings in this study is that this small group of African American, middle class parents actively and purposefully work hard at empowering their adolescents to view academic achievement as impacting life quality and helping to sustain social, economic and career status in spite of systemic racism. Although the findings in this study are not generalizable, what the study's findings suggest about this specific group of Black, middle class parents is significant. Findings suggest that they have taught their African American adolescent offspring that an academic achievement ideology is significant to quality of life and resisting systemic racism. In Chapter 6, several conclusions emanating from this qualitative study on African American, middle class parents' sharing of a racism resistant achievement ideology with their offspring are discussed.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of high achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. Academic achievement in advanced-level courses in high school can have consequences for long term economic and educational opportunity, and social stratification through adulthood (Muller, Riegle-Crumb, Schiller, Wilkinson & Frank, 2010). However, African American students remain poorly represented and retained nationally in gifted and AP classrooms; this is beyond statistical chance and is not a trivial issue (Ford & Whiting, 2010). "Underrepresentation of Black students in gifted programs is a major waste to society and an erasure of individual talent" (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 29), and "relatively little scholarship has focused on this prevalent issue" (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p.29).

#### **The Persistence of Racism**

After more than 30 years of education reform, racism continues to persist in schools (Garcia & Guerra, 2004, p. 150). CRAI shared by parents with their adolescents cannot eliminate racism from intruding on the lives of Black parents, or their adolescents. Inequality due to societal racism doesn't start or stop at the schoolhouse doors, and what the parents in this study have taught their children is not a cure all for all of society's racism ills.

The dominant, pervasive, social perspective in America regarding African Americans continues to be that they are inherently deficient. This perspective originated with “slavery, colonization, the ideology of White supremacy, and the legacies of segregation and apartheid” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 141). In education environments today, not only does pessimism about Black students’ academic capacity exist but, “the more important problem is that in general, educators are in denial” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 141) regarding their contribution to the problem. Oates (2009) used National Education al Longitudinal Study (NELS) data from 1988, and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 1994, of 24,599 African American adolescent students, to empirically explain on a macro level, what contributes to the ongoing black-white performance gap (Oates, 2009). Oates (2009) study’s purpose was to understand whether the achievement gap is most impacted by, “what students ‘bring to’ school, or ‘what happens to them’ at school (p. 436). Oates found that what students bring to school appears less consequential to the racial achievement gap than on what happens when they get there, i.e., the quality of education provided, and the race-contingent treatment they receive (p. 436). Oates (2009) recommendation is systems must do more to teach educators to provide access to demanding, invigorating curricula and “unambiguous messages” (p. 439) to Black students and their families regarding expecting them to succeed and achieve academically.

The African American middle class parents in this study are a very select group. Their adolescents are proven academic achievers in AP and gifted. This study does not represent the majority of African American parents or students. Yet, observing how the

parents in this study use a CRAI to help support their adolescents' above average academic achievement is qualitative research data focused on familial support behaviors of a small group of Black parents. This study informs researchers and educators about dimensions of African American parents' intentional sharing of an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism; middle class African American parents of academic achievers have been largely excluded from the scholarly research.

### **Adult Educator Accountability**

For educators of adults, this study has implications for teaching and learning in a variety of contexts. Teachers of adults help to connect students to personal empowerment and to change, and as agents of change, adult educators can become "champions of social justice" (Johnson-Bailey, 2013, p.17). Although education program planners at the high school level may not view or even characterize what they do as adult education when creating and delivering parent and family resources, staff development, teacher training, and program and policy information for parents, teachers, counselors and administrators, they are doing just that. In addition, ability tracking decisions made by White education professionals in public schools comprise the vast majority of the teacher and counselor ranks today, and they shape the long range education and career plans of students (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, p. 85). Program planners not only powerfully design, develop, and shape plans, but have the power to decide who is eligible for, contacted, and included in program participation (Forester, 1989). The field of adult education is responsible for including contemporary African American educational experiences within the "portrait of adult education, by broadening the dialogue to include issues of power and access" (Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 104). African Americans have long sought the benefits of

education for themselves and for their children (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, p.79). Despite these efforts, too many African Americans are locked out of opportunities to reach their full academic potential.

### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine African American, middle class parents' facilitation of an academic achievement ideology that is racism-resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and Gifted Education classrooms. The three research questions addressed in this study were:

1. How do African American, middle class parents come to acquire or learn an achievement ideology that is resistant to racism?
2. How do African American, middle class parents of adolescents enact an achievement ideology with them that resists racism?
3. What are the consequences or results of African American parents enacting an achievement ideology with their adolescents that is resistant to racism?

Education has long been used by African Americans as a means to achieve upward economic, social, and occupational mobility (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). However, there are many teachers today who "don't have a clue about the history of Black education, and the African American narrative and intellectual tradition" (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p.101). Research understanding of how some Black families turn the achievement ideology that they share with their children into a reality regarding academic success, while others have not, is needed. This study although not generalizable, does provide some insight. Findings suggest that this group of African

American, middle class parents of adolescent academic achievers with the means to access resources, tools, and extensive support networks, engage in ways that support high achievement and are racism resistant.

The theoretical frameworks that shaped this study included CRT, CRAI, achievement ideology, and transformative learning theory. Use of these lenses of observation helped me to critically focus on parent involvement and engagement, race, racism, social class, adolescent academic achievement, and transformative learning. A critical approach to understanding adult learning sees it as challenging dominant ideology, unmasking power, contesting hegemony, overcoming alienation, pursuing liberation, reclaiming reason and practicing democracy (Brookfield, 2005, p. 2).

The eight study participants are parents of students from the same southeastern high school, and their participation was voluntarily obtained through the use of the purposeful, criterion based sampling method. Initial contact was made to inform potential participants about the research study and to generate interest. An initial screening letter was sent to potential participants, and a subsequent questionnaire was completed by those interested in voluntary participation. Criteria for this study included: being the African American parent of an academically high achieving African American adolescent who had earned above average grades in AP and/or the gifted education program in high school, parents' educational attainment, and the family's SES. Two semi-structured interviews were the primary methods of data collection for this qualitative study, along with face-to-face member checks, and the screening questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative method.

Findings revealed six main themes that addressed the three research questions, as well as several subsequent, supportive subthemes within each main theme. Education impacts life quality was the main theme addressing research question one, and included three subthemes which were life chances, career uplift, and impacting social class status. Expect to work twice as hard to get half as far as Whites was the first main theme to address research question two, and there were two subthemes that emanated from it which were, you are as smart, and educator bias. The second main theme addressing research question two was using available resources to support learning, and the subthemes were system contacts, school contacts, and technology resources. The third main theme addressing research question two was that parents required adolescents take rigorous classes, and the subtheme of gifted and AP advantages followed. The fourth main theme addressing research question two was that parents have high expectation talks with adolescents, and the ensuing subthemes of frequency of conversations, above average grades expected, grade checking, and racism beyond school. Addressing research question three was the main theme that networking enhances educational, racial, and social class experience, and the three subthemes emanating from that were parents model networking, adolescents report on friendships in gifted and AP, and adolescents report on racism experienced in gifted and AP. Conclusions and implications for practice, theory and additional research will be discussed.

From this study's findings I have concluded three things about the participants' facilitation of a high achievement ideology that is racism resistant in their adolescent offspring in AP and gifted education programs. First, from one generation to the next, this group of African American, middle class parents report learning and sharing that

above average academic achievement positively impacts life quality and works to resist racism. Second, this group of African American, middle class parents report enacting an achievement ideology by negotiating teacher relationships, disciplining their adolescents, and managing the schooling process for their adolescents. Third, this group of African American, middle class parents report that the consequences of enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology in their adolescents also enhances their adolescents' social capital connections.

**Conclusion 1: These parents, who are like the majority of their elder relatives, intentionally passed on racially and culturally relevant knowledge about academic achievement resisting racism and discrimination.**

The African American, middle class parents in this study have taught their adolescents that above average achievement positively impacts life quality and works to resist racism. Positive self-esteem and racial identity develop for Black children through the efforts of their parents and other significant adults in their lives (Ford & Whiting, 2010). Discussed initially in Chapter 5 in this qualitative study, Tillman (2006) found that culturally relevant, "culturally sensitive research approaches position the experiential knowledge of African Americans as legitimate, appropriate, and necessary for analyzing, understanding and reporting data" (p.270). Black parents of academically gifted adolescents teach them racial pride, as well as the necessity of intellectual achievement as a buffer to racism (Carter, 2008a, p. 483), in a society where being Black and middle class does not afford the same privileges as being White and middle class (Bowser, 2007, p.6). "By the time children grow into adulthood, they have learned who matters, what priorities are important, and with whom and how to interact" (Guy, 1999, p. 5).

The parents in this study deliberately guide their adolescents to view academic achievement as significant to impacting their life quality in the long term. Seven of the eight parents in this study also learned this view from their own parents. The majority of study participants were taught that educational achievement and attainment have profound consequences for life quality. All eight of this study's participants shared this ideology with their children. Within this context, the majority in this small sample group of parents were also taught and encouraged by their own parents to take academically rigorous and challenging classes in high school. Six of the eight study participants were in gifted and talented programs themselves. All eight of the parents' children are in rigorous gifted and talented academic programs in the same high school. Most African American high school students across the country however, are excluded by education gatekeepers, i.e., teachers, counselors and administrators from participating in rigorous gifted education and AP classes (Ford & Whiting, 2007; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008; Whiting & Ford, 2009). "African American students continue to be under-identified and hence denied an opportunity to have their gifts and talents developed" (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 29). Yet, parental persistence undertaken by the majority of this study's participants, made it possible for their offspring to be in gifted and in AP. The African American, middle class parents that comprised the small purposeful sample of adults taking part in this study used a variety of tactics and tools to personally work at ensuring that their adolescents were included in gifted and AP classes. AP and gifted classes, to the parents in this study, are important to high quality educational experiences for their children that will critically impact academic achievement potential, and what lies ahead for their offspring beyond high school.

The experiences of the middle class are not uniform across racial groups (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999, p. 10). African American, middle class parents ought not to rely on blind faith regarding receiving equitable educational experiences for their children in integrated schools. The significant lack of racial and cultural diversity in gifted education programs in the U.S. is an educational tragedy that continues (Ford, 2004). Ford and Whiting (2007, p. 29) explain:

Underrepresentation of this group in gifted education reaches far beyond problems associated with identification instruments and assessment procedures: that is, measures, policies and procedures are symptoms of a much larger social issue. We believe, instead that the deficit perspective about culturally diverse students, namely, Black students, hinders educators from recognizing the gifts and talents, potential and promise of African American students.

African American parents must recognize the specific sociopolitical challenges that they and their children face in a larger society that continues to be predicated on the “systematic denial and limiting of educational opportunity for African Americans precisely because they [are] African Americans” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 51). Many African American, middle class parents erroneously assume that their children will receive high quality educational experiences in their integrated, middle class schools just by attending (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p.95). Most African Americans attending middle class public schools trail White and Asian students in academic outcomes nationwide (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Virtually all aspects of academic underperformance, including low graduation rates, persist among students from the African American, middle class (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 111). Beyond social

class, racism depresses the academic performance of most African American students (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 111).

The Black, middle class parents in this study are aware of the institutional realities of racism that shape their lives and the lives of their offspring. These parents consistently shared with their adolescents that being involved in authentic, equitable, high quality, educational experiences can help to support navigating and negotiating potential roadblocks and barriers such as racism, to future objectives and goals. The Black, middle class parents in this study not only saw to it that their adolescent offspring took academically competitive and rigorous AP and Gifted Education classes, but these parents have been richly involved on a daily basis, in helping to support their adolescents' above average academic achievement, and reaching their academic potential in these classes through a variety of tactics and methods.

### **Academically Rigorous Classes are a Requirement**

None of the parents in this study stood on the sidelines waiting for education gatekeepers to act on behalf of their children. The decision to engage with a school on behalf of an adolescent "cannot occur by invitation only" (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 95). The parents in this study took action to get their adolescents into academically rigorous and competitive classes. This group of highly self-motivated parents dynamically and actively investigated the education system for information by personally seeking out school and school system authorities to inform them about advanced and accelerated academic programs, i.e., AP and gifted education. The parents in this study navigated the process of signing up their adolescents to be screened and tested for gifted education participation and instructed guidance counselors to place their adolescents in

AP classes. In addition, these parents discussed the benefits of achieving in high school with their adolescents and compelled them to take part. They also routinely explained to their adolescents that high achievement in classes like AP and gifted worked to thwart racism. Messages to the offspring of the participants in this study that were often repeated were that they needed to work hard to excel, and that they should talk openly about their experiences in school at home. The parents in this study described intentionally teaching their adolescents, as most of them had been instructed by their own parents, to critically focus on the potential long term benefits of high achievement in academically demanding classes in high school, after high school. Academic success in high school has major consequences for SES and well-being in adulthood (Muller, Schiller, Wilkinson & Frank, p.1039, 2010).

What the parents in this study shared with their adolescents has led to the conclusion that they critically taught their adolescents the significance of above average academic achievement to their lives, and to buffering against racism. Findings from this study do have relevance in generating a compelling argument for additional scholarly research on ethnic minority parenting, race, social class, and above average academic achievement in high school. Most African Americans in advanced and competitive high school courses have performance outcomes that are significantly lower than Whites (Muller, et.al, 2010). Research about positive schooling experiences as well as outcomes for African Americans “in gifted education programs from the mouths of the students” (Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008, p. 435), as well as their parents and other adult family members that support their giftedness can help inform scholars about protective factors in African American parent and child relationships that support academic achievement.

This study provides research understanding that is not focused on low academic performance, or the intransigence of too many education gatekeepers who intentionally or unintentionally exclude African Americans from high quality educational experiences, but on the bullishness and perseverance of a purposeful sample of African American, middle class parents actively negotiating and supporting their adolescents' high achievement in AP and gifted education, while also systematically teaching adolescents that high achievement can help thwart racism in the process. This study on African American, middle class parents can spur education practitioners and researchers to become aware of and reflective about opening doors to opportunity for gifted Black students. Educators must make conscious decisions to aggressively and proactively recruit and retain African American students in gifted education programs (Ford & Whiting, p. 29, 2007).

Wildhagen (2012) studied the unrealized academic potential among African American students, and differences in academic outcomes in high school between Blacks and Whites. Her comprehensive study examined the underrepresentation of high achieving African Americans in advanced and gifted and talented classes at the high school level. She concluded that African American students' grades received by teachers were not "commensurate with their actual academic abilities" (Wildhagen, 2012, p. 91), and the main reason for the unrealized academic potential of Black students was that "on average, teachers perceive White students as exerting more effort and conforming more to classroom expectations" than Black students (Wildhagen, 2012, p. 91). A persistent and spurious "national ideology about Black intellectual inferiority" (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 8) continues to pervade education environments. Equitable education

experiences for most Black students remains elusive. But, this is not new news. What this study concludes however, is that the intentional parenting behaviors utilized by this group of parents teaches adolescents that racism can be resisted in institutions through above average academic achievement, and by working to reach one's full academic potential.

### **Generations Teach that Achievement can Thwart Racism**

Black parents have for generations taught their offspring the significance of academic achievement in stemming racism. Perry, Steele & Hilliard (2003) argue that a "philosophy of education was powerfully implicated in motivating African Americans across generations to vigorously pursue education" (p. 12). This was also central to the identity formation of African Americans as intellectually capable people (Perry, et.al. 2003, p. 12). Recognizing that racism is real and that it can potentially limit school and life success is critical to Black adolescents' having positive racial identities (Carter, 2008b, p.13). Black students must develop adaptive strategies reflective of positive achievement attitudes and a desire to overcome racism as a potential barrier to success (Carter, 2008a, p. 489). Black parents are critical in helping children develop a healthy resistance to racism (Carter, 2008b). What is still happening in schools today is the perpetuation of racial inequity through less access to advanced courses which can subject students to "long lasting consequences for individual achievement" (Muller, et al., 2010, p. 1056). The African American parents in this study intentionally taught their adolescents an achievement ideology that rejects spurious arguments about Black intellectual inferiority, and also encourages and supports behaviors that entail actively pursuing above average, academic achievement in the most academically rigorous programs and classes in public high schools today. Shifting the lens of research towards

examining and understanding Black parent engagement strategies that help to elicit positive academic outcomes can help to illuminate what minority parents of adolescent academic achievers are doing to help their children better realize their academic potential.

African Americans in the middle class, like others in the middle class, teach their children to use education to impact wealth, power, and status over a lifetime. Education has long been viewed in the African American community as a key not only for upward mobility, but a way to move further away from racism. African American adults know the damage that racism can cause, and have a lengthy history of engaging in “homeplace” (hooks, 1990, p. 41) discussions to strategize ways to resist, navigate and survive it that include educational attainment. The majority of the parents in this study were taught by their own parents that academic achievement could have a mollifying effect on racism. Thus, when they became parents they taught their adolescents strategies to get the system to work for them and to include them in rigorous AP and gifted education classes, and to support their achievement. The parents in this study view their roles as teaching their adolescents to see themselves as cultural, social, and intellectual human beings with great personal and cultural group value (Ani, 2013). The parents in this study support their adolescents by teaching them an academic achievement ideology that places significant value on education used as a tool for social, occupational, and economic advancement, as well as a tool to negotiate systemic racism.

### **Parents and Teens Discuss Achievement Together**

Elders and ancestors used as role models for adolescents to emulate can personally center Black adolescents’ self-will and conscious behaviors, and “impress upon them the need to succeed for their community group, or to prove naysayers wrong”

(Ani, 2013, p. 416). Yet, additional research is also needed to learn more about “reciprocal relationships between parents’ expectations and adolescents’ expectations” (Zhang, Haddad, Torres, & Chen, 2011 p. 486) and in particular, how the realization of reciprocal expectations between African American parents and adolescents pertain to above average academic achievement. Parents’ narratives that steer Black adolescents towards personal and academic success in spite of society’s obstacles, hurdles, or barriers, provide a critical counterbalance from the barrage of societal messages focused on Black failure and “provide students with points of reference for hard work, persistence, and success” (Graham & Anderson, p. 494, 2008). Additional research on African American, middle class parents of adolescent, above average academic achievers may reveal ways that education policymakers, education professionals, and stakeholders design, develop and deliver programs, initiatives, policies, and practices to address systemic educational opportunity in the recruitment, retention and outcomes of gifted and talented African American students in special programs.

**Conclusion 2: These parents enacted an achievement ideology in their adolescents by negotiating teacher relationships, disciplining their adolescents, and managing the schooling process for their adolescents.**

This study has demonstrated that these participants taught their adolescents to fully invest in rigorous, high quality academic experiences in high school. There is an intergenerational quality to learning criticality across generations. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2 in this study, Lareau (2003) observed that social class values commonly shared by most middle class parents with their offspring, whether parents are Black or White, includes teaching them the significance of a quality education in reaching their

long term goals and helping them achieve an affluent quality of life. Accepting academic challenges and performing at a high level of achievement in school is not only necessary, but expected of middle class children. African American, middle class “use their considerable assets to ensure their children will be able to reproduce the class position to which the children have grown accustomed once they reach adulthood” (Lacy, p. 221, 2007), and schooling quality plays heavily into middle class parenting strategy and achievement ideology shared. Particular to the African American parents in this study is that they were relentless in seeing to it that their adolescents had educational opportunities and experiences to help them develop their full academic potential.

Enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology means demonstrating for adolescents what it means to be critical. The achievement ideology of the small group of parents in this study seems to speak less of transformative learning than it does of the educational experiences of African Americans in racially diverse environments impacted by “kinship bonds, strong work orientation, adaptability of family roles, [and] high achievement orientation” (Marsh, Chaney & Jones, 2012, p.39). African American adolescents’ resilience, engagement and individual change, as Marsh, Chaney & Jones (2012) found, was connected to a strong work orientation and a high achievement orientation that supported participants’ academic potential. Research on African American adolescents’ resilience, engagement, and academic achievement is growing, but literature about the parents from whom they learned it is conspicuously absent. Concerned researchers have indeed worked to understand African American adolescents committed to academic excellence (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010; Carter, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; O’Connor, 2014; Reis, 2005; Robinson & Biran, 2006; Scott, Taylor &

Palmer, 2013; Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves & Howell, 2004; Wright, 2009). Yet, the assertive parenting behaviors of the parents in this study that were needed to teach their adolescents a racism resistant achievement ideology were not accidents of fate, or wishful thinking. Nothing was left to chance. The parents here were not passive bystanders to the status quo. Rather they were active agents in creating the change that they wanted to see. Renowned researcher Paulo Freire posited in 1970 that a critical consciousness of “oppression and its causes [are] objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their engagement in the struggle for liberation” (Freire, 2009, p. 48); “reflection-true reflection-leads to action” (Freire, 2009, p. 66). The parents in this study act and acted in ways that were critically empowering of themselves and of their adolescents. The Black middle class parents in this study equipped their adolescents with strong self identity messages framed through a critical lens of cultural strength, intrinsic intelligence, and personal power. For societal oppression to take one over it is essential to “become convinced of [one’s] intrinsic inferiority” (Freire, 2009, p. 153). Fighting dominant, intrinsic, inferiority messages requires claiming life-affirming humanization and partaking in a level of committed involvement to end being perceived as less than human (Freire, 2009, p. 68).

The gap in the literature on African American middle class parents of above average adolescent achievers represents missed opportunity to richly inform adult program planners, educator trainers, staff developers, and parent educators about academic achievement support that is adult education, and that should not be rendered invisible. The parents in this study intentionally discussed with their adolescents the life quality benefits of AP and gifted, and that academic achievement in academically

rigorous classes represents a necessary and coveted step onto the path toward lifelong success.

### **Investing in Academic Achievement**

As mentioned, the majority of the parents in this study not only worked to assure that their adolescents took academically rigorous AP classes, and were also tested and accepted into the gifted education program, but required that their adolescents participate. What is additionally compelling is that these parents vigorously taught their adolescents to appreciate their individual potential as intellectual beings, and to anticipate acquiring prized and valuable intellectual experiences in their gifted and AP classes. Two of the mothers of boys insisted that their sons take AP classes, even when their sons balked at the prospect. Both mothers insisted nonetheless. The mothers explained to their sons that they were smart and capable, and thus obligated to take AP classes and to also do well in them. African American adolescent boys who hear “loud and clear” (Neblett, Chavous, Nguyen & Sellers, 2009, p. 256) messages of support from their parents about their potential for academic achievement were “more academically motivated and successful” (Neblett, et. al., 2009, p. 256). Scott, Taylor & Palmer (2013) found in their qualitative study of 70 African American, college-bound, male high school seniors that “parents’ positive and active involvement increases the likelihood of those students completing high school and enrolling in college” (p. 294).

The two mothers in this study whose sons did not initially want to take AP classes also reported that their sons eventually expressed that they liked taking them. Study participant Athena Anderson said, “Once Atlas got into it he told me that he was happy that he did it.” Giselle Gavin said, “My son Gray now boasts to peers that his grade point

average is higher than theirs, and that he is successful in AP and gifted classes. He takes great pride in that." Parents' positive messages to their adolescents about their intellectual capabilities are important to adolescents' efforts, investment and interest in achieving in school. Parents can dramatically affirm boys' self worth and encourage them to press on academically (Neblett, et. al., 2009, p. 256). High expectations and consistent encouragement and actions that enhance learning opportunities, are ways that families can encourage educational achievement of their teens (Catsambis, 2002, pp. 169-170).

### **Supportive Communication and Discussion**

The eight parents in this study consistently and routinely affirm with their adolescents' their intellectual capacity and academic abilities through supportive communication and ongoing discussion at home. This group of parents share with their adolescents that by taking rigorous classes like gifted and AP they will be better prepared to attain their long range career and economic goals. The mothers of the two boys that initially balked at the prospect of taking AP classes bluntly discussed with them their high academic expectations of them in high school, and their rationale. These parents consistently reinforced the importance and value of AP and gifted in high school to career and personal goals. What is discussed in the home environment plays a crucial role in gifted Black students' academic success in gifted education programs (Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008). African American parents who understand the benefits, opportunities and resources available in AP are in a position to engage, challenge and support their adolescents in these rigorous classes (Whiting & Ford, 2009).

## Academic Success Stories

African American, middle class parents frequently share academic and career success stories of adult family members with their adolescents to illustrate for them the potential long term benefits of achievement in high school to goal attainment throughout adulthood. Stories of success shared with adolescents augment teaching an ideology of academic achievement that is racism resistant. Adolescents who are taught to be critically conscious of their “ancestors’ perseverance in life” (Carter, 2008b, p. 17), can give adolescents “a sense of meaning and purpose” (Carter, 2008b, p.17). African American, middle class parents are adult role models for their adolescents. “Modeling is an important component of academic development among Black males and females” (Toldson & Owens, 2010, p.94). “Parents’ high achievement expectations and active encouragement to prepare for college are by far the most important family practices at this stage of schooling” (Catsambis, , 2002, p.168). The parents in this study view an individual’s career, social and economic prospects as significantly impacted by academic achievement; success stories shared by parents and elders about the educational achievements of family members can make a lasting impression on adolescents.

Intergenerational sharing of achievement ideology initially illustrated in chapters 4 and 5 of this study show data captured in relationship to what Perry, Steele & Hilliard (2003) characterized as narrative stories shared by elders in African American families to show adolescents “who [they] can become” (p. 50). Stories of African American experience are passed down from generation to the next (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 50). Rich details were captured first in this study regarding what the adult participants learned about achievement, race, racism and social class from their parents, grandparents,

uncles and aunts when they were in high school, as well as the oral traditions in this small group of Black families and their information sharing used for survival and upward mobility. In addition, readers of this study may take note of the similarities in the information shared *with* the study's participants, and also shared *by* the study's participants. Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital advantage research focused on concerted cultivation, or the explicit sharing of social cultural values within families from a social class perspective. This was discussed in this study's chapter 1, and it appears distinctively racialized in this study. The rationale behind the sharing of African American narratives has for generations been a combined, central philosophy of: (a) teaching the importance of education and (b) teaching identity formation focused on intellectual capacity (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 12). And for the participants in this study, the act of sharing a racism resistant achievement ideology generationally has continued. The study of different groups of African American middle class parents and elders is suggested, and could be additionally revealing.

### **Parents Team With Adolescents to Sustain Achievement**

This study also concludes that it is not just that these parents talk with their adolescents about academic achievement that distinguishes them. Yes, supportive talk and modeling positive behaviors for adolescents to emulate have been found to have an important impact on them (Nebblett, Chavous, Nguyen & Sellers 2009; Scott, Taylor & Palmer, 2013). Yet, this group of parents did not stop there. These parents actively support their adolescents through routine hands on interaction, and they use their energy and acumen to swiftly and definitively tap into their cache of resources and contacts when needed. The parents in this study are highly involved. For example: parents in this

sample group frequently check their adolescents' grades online. If there is a problem, they know and can act. Another example is that these parents regularly check in with their adolescents to discuss progress on projects and assignments. Third, the discussions that these parents have with their adolescents about their academic progress are so common and routine that their adolescents ask for their help well before a major problem with a class, grade, or project arose. These parents teach their adolescents that they can access a host of resources and contacts to support their schooling experiences. The participants also maintain access to teachers, counselors, administrators and other school authorities. Parents who help their kids with school are comfortable talking to teachers, encourage children to do well in school, and maintain high expectations, and had higher-performing children (Toldson & Owens, 2010, p.95).

### **African American Parents of Achievers Act Fast**

Middle class parents' resources commonly include access to professionals in various fields, specialized tutors, state-of-the-art equipment and technology, and myriad support resources. The parents in this study act quickly to connect with pros to support and problem solve educational concerns on behalf of their adolescents. Using available resources to help sustain achievement is an aspect of achievement ideology shared by this group of middle class parents with their adolescents. This group of parents has in common their adolescents' ease in asking them for assistance and support to help sustain achievement when they need it. The lines of communication about schooling between the parents and adolescents in this study are open, ongoing and positive. These parents and adolescents work as a team with common goals, and those goals include not wasting time when help is needed to sustain academic achievement. Catsambis (2002) found that

effective parent involvement for academic success in high school is “geared towards advising or guiding teens’ academic decisions” (p. 168). Parents’ acting quickly to intervene and provide tools, equipment, experts, and information for their adolescents is active parent engagement behavior that is important to sustaining above average academic success.

**Conclusion 3: These parents reported that their adolescents developed friendships across racial lines in AP and gifted – a consequence of enacting a racism resistant achievement ideology that includes enhancing their adolescents social capital connections**

The African American, middle class parents in this study reported that their adolescents developed friendships across racial lines in their gifted and AP classes. There are powerful benefits to social class connections (Lareau & Conley, 2008). Life chances are closely linked to social class (Lareau & Conley, 2008, p. 332). Valued resources such as wealth, a white collar career, advanced education and home ownership “are not evenly distributed throughout society” (Lareau, 2003. pp. 7-8). “Individuals’ chances of interacting with any given kind of institution are not random: families from elite backgrounds tend to participate in institutions serving the elite” (Lareau, p. 15, 2003), and social class patterns lead to the “transmission of differential advantage” (Lareau, p. 5, 2003).

A body of research indicates though that even high achieving African American adolescents in predominantly White schools can and do experience pain and isolation (Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005). A critical race consciousness is a counter narrative, “but it is not the end-all and be-all” (Carter, 2008b, p. 24). Yet, a critical race consciousness

“can certainly buffer Black students’ experiences with structural barriers they face in achieving their life goals” (Carter, 2008b, p. 24). Some students are able to develop protective behaviors, but some do not (Reis, Colbert & Hebert, 2005). Ford & Moore (2004) defined the relentless racism challenges experienced by gifted students in schooling environments as a *Black tax*. African American students pay this “tax” by being excluded and/or isolated in class as a result of being in gifted education programs where they are in the racial minority (Bonner, Jennings, Marbley & Brown, 2008). Many struggle to develop a positive self worth which includes their academic, personal, and social worth as racial beings (Ford & Whiting, 2010, p. 149), and “destructive messages and associated challenges may be particularly difficult for African American students who are gifted” (Ford & Whiting, 2010, p. 149). “Black students, particularly adolescents, internalize deficit thinking orientations” (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 37). Some question their abilities and sabotage their own achievement (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 37). And some adolescents have the ability to “rise despite the many obstacles (including the Black tax) that they encounter” (Bonner, Jennings, Marbley & Brown, 2008, p. 96). However, in a society where racism “operates with permanency” (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 41) teaching coping strategies is not enough. “Being a Black body in a sea of White bodies is no easy task” (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 38). Those who work in schools and with educators must actively foster antiracist learning environments where African American students can thrive (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 41) and reach their academic achievement potential.

African American parents of gifted children do not want them to be isolated or lonely in predominantly White, gifted and talented classes. African American parents of

gifted children want them to be academically challenged, yet they also want them to “fit in socially and to have friends” (Ford, 2004, p.1). Witkow and Fuligni (2010) found in their comprehensive study of over 600 ethnically diverse high school seniors that those who are interested, engaged and highly successful in school likely find similar peers in school, which likely leads to increased levels of academic achievement (Witkow & Fuligni, 2010, p.633). Friendship quality is also a predictor of adolescent well-being, loyalty, caring, and trust (Burk & Laursen, 2005, p. 156). And as discussed in chapter one in this study, “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984), those most valued and prized social advantages of social class, can and do support the successful negotiation of lifelong privileges in America’s stratified society.

### **Black Parents Report Adolescents’ Network with Classmates**

What can also be concluded from the small group of African American, middle class parents in this qualitative study is that they have learned through their adolescents’ reports that above average academic achievement helps support positive schooling experiences and communication and friendships with White peers in their gifted and AP classes. Shared experiences among peers positively impacts students’ identities, friendships, and subsequent academic achievement (Whaley & Noel, 2012).

The majority of high school students in integrated schools across the country are still apt to be segregated once inside of schools due to academic tracking. White students are more often tracked into AP than Black students who are routinely tracked into lower academic tracks and special education programs (Orfield, Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2010). Even in integrated schools opportunities for interaction between high school students of different races is diminished due to academic tracking (Epstein, 1985; Orfield,

et al, 2010). Education professionals who intentionally or unintentionally limit Black students' opportunities to reach their academic potential due to low level academic tracking subject Black students to low expectations and inequitable educational outcomes and experiences that can have lifelong repercussions (Muller, Reigle-Crumb, Schiller, Wilkinson & Frank, 2010). Not communicating to Black parents of gifted and talented students the potential long range benefits of AP gifted education is a travesty. Parents are less likely to involve themselves in school settings where they are not valued as members of the school community (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 37). And, when minorities are not well represented in advanced classes in racially diverse schools it is "a clear signal that elite academic positions both within high school and beyond are not the typical domain of students of color" (Muller, et al., 2010, p. 1042). Several of the parents in this study were the first to try to get their adolescents in gifted and AP. These parents researched and investigated gifted and talented school and system programs, and program requirements on their own, and then insisted that their adolescents be screened and tested. Although the findings and conclusions from this study pertain only to this small sample group, and this study is not generalizable, it is evident that the equity and excellence gap will not close without the diligent involvement of highly active, involved and committed Black parents, committed education professionals that work with students and adults, and committed education policymakers and stakeholders.

### **Study Implications for Adult Education Practice**

This study has implications for a host of education practitioners working with adults. As previously discussed, although teachers, guidance counselors, administrators and other adults interacting in high school settings may not view what they do as adult

education, it is. It may be impossible for some educators to acknowledge any role in the oppression of African American giftedness and academic achievement potential in public schools today, but research tells a very different story (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh & Holloway, 2005; Ford & Whiting, 2007; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Wildhagen, 2012.) Implications are that for education practitioners to move forward and support gifted intellect and creativity in the schooling experiences of Black adolescents, real change to educator training, i.e., antiracist reeducation of adults, must be undertaken. “Teachers are not referring Black students for gifted education; they seldom recognize gifts and talents in this group” (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 29).

Recruiting minority students for gifted education must be taught to teachers in order to impact the under-representation in “screening, identifying, and placement decisions (Elhoweris, 2008, p. 35). Compelling education system change is possible through the formal, informal, and non-formal education of adults, including teacher training, staff development, training materials, and myriad proactive incentives. Learning in adulthood occurs non-formally, informally, and formally. Formal learning takes place in institutions like schools; non-formal learning takes place in organized spaces where materials and information are shared like libraries, museums, and also schools; informal learning takes place in everyday experience (Merriam, et.al. 2007, p. 24). “Adult educators need great creativity and experimental flexibility” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 179) in teaching learners to contest oppression and inequity. Education systems are comprised today of mostly White teachers, counselors, administrators, and policy makers. To generate a vision of education experience in “a less alienated more democratic world” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 27) requires courage. “Getting people to challenge ideology, contest hegemony, and unmask

power...takes a degree of nerve for an adult teacher" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 179), but it is absolutely necessary for significant change to occur. Teacher education and teacher training that has a significantly lopsided focus on Black underachievement is unhealthy, and this has helped to perpetuate low academic expectations of Black students by education professionals.

### **Teacher Training**

There is great potential for rich contributions to the field of adult education practice regarding understanding parenting, race, social class, and adolescent academic achievement. Teacher training programs in colleges and universities must actively include instructional and research material that exemplifies and demonstrates the intellectual strengths and academic achievements of African American families and their adolescents. Pre-service teachers need to have structured opportunities to consider how to plan for and respond to Black students and their parents (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 39). The underrepresentation of African Americans in AP and Gifted Education classrooms is at such high levels nationally that research investigating social factors impacting educators' perceptions of ethnic minority giftedness is necessary (Ford & Whiting, 2010.) Teacher education programs have to include learning to understand that giftedness is represented in all culture groups. Teacher candidates are rarely asked to meaningfully examine race, power, and privilege in relationship to their own identities" (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 39). "Multicultural education preparation among school personnel – teachers, counselors, psychologists, administrators and support staff – may increase the recruitment and retention of Black students in gifted education" (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 39).

Program planning and development is one of the functions of adult education practice (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Plans that include individual or group learning in adulthood that is culturally inclusive and sensitive can help break the “destructive cycle of racial, gender, and ethnic oppression” (Guy, 1999, p. 12). Adult educators who view their work through a critical lens can provide adult learners with information to impact their behavior regarding oppressive, socially dominant hegemony (Brookfield, 2005). Self-identified, White, adult educator, Stephen Brookfield (2014) identifies teaching that is purposely antiracist as “helping learners identify and counter racist ideas and actions they detect in themselves and others” (Brookfield, 2014, p. 89), and that formal anti-racist education can engage adult learners, i.e., teachers, counselors, administrators and policymakers in “scrutinizing curricula, institutional policies, and organizational practices for evidence of structural disenfranchisement” (Brookfield, 2014, p. 90). Colleges of education need to turn out “gap-closing principals and gap-closing teachers” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, p. 161, 2003). Self-identified, African American, middle class scholars Howard and Reynolds (2008) whose children attended middle class, predominantly White schools concluded the following in their 2008 study on parent involvement and reversing African American underachievement in middle class schools (Howard and Reynolds, 2008, p. 95):

Public schools across all socio-economic levels remain politically charged sites, where parents position themselves and their children to ensure that they receive the best resources, unfettered access to vital information, and overall educational equity. Any analysis which examines this relationship between parents and schools without explicit attention to race and class miss two of the primary factors

which complicate the roles that parents play, and the degree to which they become involved.

Regardless of proximity to specialized academic programs and classes, teachers and resources, Black adolescents are still the most severely underrepresented in AP and Gifted Education classrooms nationally, and racism is highly implicated; there is significant underrepresentation in screenings and referrals of African Americans for rigorous academic programs by education gatekeepers, i.e., teachers and guidance counselors (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003; Whiting & Ford, 2009).

### **Parent Education**

The Black, middle class parents in this study whose adolescent offspring have highly achieved academically in gifted and in AP have accomplished what the majority of Black adolescents have not. Implied here is that educators have an obligation to take an active role in supporting African American parents and families in pursuing educational equity. Providing gifted program information to African American parents must become an aggressive undertaking by schools and school systems (Ford & Whiting, p. 40, 2007). Educators can critically, consciously, and conscientiously support gifted and talented educational opportunity for Black students. Yes, counter-narratives about African Americans as intellectuals are intentionally passed to Black children in some Black families and are used in the development of an achievement philosophy that contests negative narratives about African Americans (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 51). However, Black parents and children and families cannot do it all. Systemic racist practices and procedures have powerfully manipulated away educational opportunities from gifted and talented Blacks (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh & Holloway, 2005; Ford &

Whiting, 2007; Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Wildhagen, 2012). The attitudes and beliefs of teachers, counselors, principals and other education stakeholders must change (Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008). Black parents whose adolescents attend more affluent, high quality, integrated schools may mistakenly believe that their children's presence ensures access to rigorous curriculum, equitable learning opportunities, and high teacher expectations (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). This is not correct. As the African American parents in this study view it, their job of personally and intentionally cultivating an achievement ideology in their adolescents that is racism resistant is thus not only necessary, but imperative.

### **Study Implications for Theory**

Research is needed to generate an understanding in the scholarly literature about African American parent engagement and academic achievement, not just failure. Theoretical and methodological approaches in research have provided very limited information about the educational experiences of Black people (Wong & Rowley, 2001). "There is a great need for the development of theories, empirical studies and research methods that advance understanding of diverse populations in culturally sensitive ways" (Wong & Rowley, 2007, p.57). There is abundant information about African American parent engagement and involvement and student failure. The first critical issue is that researchers must recognize their own cultural biases and be sensitive to the cultures of the participants in their studies to develop more sound, comprehensive theories and research (Wong & Rowley, 2007, p. 57).

Minority families are capable of significant positive influence in their children's lives, and the positive impact of the African American family must be addressed and

included in scholarly research (Jones & Palmer, 2004). Second, research must work towards understanding the complexities of how race and class interact in parents' relationships and engagement with their adolescents and what occurs in schooling experiences. As discussed in chapters one and two in this study, CRT can be used to inform education research and practice about the learning processes involved in African American, middle class families. Race impacts educational experience even as Black people move up the socioeconomic ladder (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 94). Transformative learning in adulthood is defined as using a lens of critical reflection and learning that supports transforming problematic frames of reference and redefining them. African American parents' transforming of unresolved areas of societal social conflict into learning opportunities for personal growth, academic achievement, and cultural awareness can be applied and used in a variety of contexts. Reframing research models to include race as well as social class in the scholarship about educational inequity will inform the achievement gap in different ways.

Increased parent involvement may buffer against discriminatory treatment at school (Rowley, et al. 2008, p. 84). However, research on whether different study participant groups of African American, middle class parents of adolescents' achieving highly in gifted and AP purposely share with them an achievement ideology resistant to racism is not currently known. As also stated, this study is not generalizable. Additional research in this area may yield different results in different parts of the country, and from different participant groups. As discussed in chapter 1 in this study, concerned actors suggest in studies across disciplines and over many decades that societal hostility and indifference to race has "led to the wholesale sub-education of Black children" (Smith,

1999, p. 138). Thus, the time to “build a critical practice of adult education in the interest of African Americans” (Brookfield, 2003, p. 167) is now. Identifying African American students’ strengths and support systems, and building on them (Williams & Bryan, 2013, p. 298) is imperative to developing equity in educational experience.

Discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of this study, African American students with “strong racial and achievement identities may develop a critical race achievement ideology and enact resilient, adaptive behaviors in racially challenging contexts” (Carter, 2008, p. 466). More research is implicated. Developing an achievement ideology resistant to racism comes from someplace. Evidence in this study indicates that African American parents, and other adult relatives in the homeplace, have a distinctive role in teaching a racism resistant achievement ideology to African American adolescents. Scholars have not paid attention to African American students who “beat the odds” (Williams & Bryan, 2013, p. 295), or to the “protective factors or processes that operate in the daily lives of African American youth” (p. 295).

### **Gap Closing**

The life narratives of the participants in this study have provided thick, rich, first-hand accounts of their purposeful behaviors and attitudes supportive of an achievement ideology that works to resist racism in their adolescent offspring. Yet, this one study is not enough. More research is needed on African American, middle class parents of above average academic achievers. Despite systemic racism, the “content and power of the African American philosophy of schooling” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p.12) shared in Black households past and present is “powerfully implicated in motivating African Americans across generations to vigorously pursue education” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard,

2003, p.12), which developed into “a philosophy of education that was passed on in oral and written narratives” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p.12). African American, middle class parents for generations have viewed “advanced education as a way up for their children” (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, p. 130). Fostering a strong Black identity at home is also embedded in the philosophy of racism resistant academic achievement. A Black child’s belief in his or her intellectual ability can be interrupted by teachers and others who “subtly or explicitly convey a disbelief in the child’s ability for high academic achievement” (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003, p. 79). Black, middle class’ racial identities reflect “parents’ perceptions about how best to prepare their children for the White world, while maintaining connections to other Blacks” (Lacy, 2007, p. 15). Research understanding of the complexities involved in supporting the fulfillment of academic achievement potential by African American adolescents is needed (Wildhagen, 2012).

America has moved away from a primarily industrial workforce, to a primarily white collar, knowledge-focused workforce; middle class parents encourage knowledge-focused career paths for their children. Knowledge workers work everywhere, utilize technology well, and are valued in the workforce (Merriam, et.al, 2007, p. 19). Moreover, “the labor force has changed from one dominated by blue-collar occupations to one where the majority of jobs are considered white collar” (Merriam, et.al, 2007, p. 16). A “shift from a manufacturing-based economy, to a service economy” (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 78) has taken place. Technology has significantly impacted the nature of work, and workers in America. What the African American, middle class parents in this study have shared with their adolescents supportive of an academic achievement ideology that

is racism resistant can critically inform adult educators' interactions in support of different aspects of adult learning. It must no longer be ignored that race and class continue to operate as "systemic forms of inequality" within the social structures of American society (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 61), and "segregation inside of schools has actually increased in recent years" (Andersen & Collins, 2007, p. 69).

Gifted and AP participation and achievement are of great importance today. The consequences of high quality educational experiences in high school, and later in college and career quality, can be long term. From this study there is greater understanding of the impact of active and intentional parent engagement and involvement in getting Black teens into AP and gifted, keeping them there, and supporting their academic success. Reading this study can critically transform and inform understandings about a racism resistant achievement ideology shared by a small group of African American, middle class parents with their adolescents to support above average academic achievement in gifted and AP.

Adult educators understand the significance of continuous learning in adulthood. Cognitive development occurs in the thinking patterns of adults as they grow older (Merriam, et. al., 2007). Adult learning is contextual. Adult learners can learn to look at experiences from a "variety of points of view and see that concepts and feelings depend on the perspective through which they occur" (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 29). This study encourages educators of adults to foster change in their perceptions, i.e., educators' perceptions about Black parents, children, and families and minority intellectual capability, giftedness, and academic achievement. Although this study is not generalizable its findings do imply that more research in this area is needed, and that is

my strong recommendation. Are characteristics of an African American, academic achievement ideology that is racism resistant different within a different group of Black, middle class parents, or do different Black, middle class parents of adolescent achievers in AP and gifted education teach a racism resistant academic achievement ideology at all?

Howard and Reynolds (2008) characterize much of the historic and current research on the academic achievement gap as flawed that follow a minority group “deficit model” (p. 84). Conceptual research frameworks must today evolve to expand research understanding inclusive of academic achievement of African Americans. “Non-White and non-Asian students in middle class schools are frequently overlooked in the reporting and investigation of school achievement, particularly as it relates to parental involvement and engagement” (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 80). Moving the focus of research towards minority family engagement strengths enables deeper and different examination of “issues of race and class in the pursuit of educational equity” (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 94). Race is an inescapable omnipresence in daily life in a “society stratified by primarily by race” (Lacy, 2007, p. 219).

Understudied in the literature is Black parent and family engagement focused on African American adolescents taking AP and Gifted Education classrooms (Henfield, Moore & Wood, 2008). Literature on Black, middle class parents of academically above average, high achieving adolescents in AP and gifted is in even shorter supply. The lack of research attention to African American parents and families in the Black, middle class has hidden, suppressed, and masked issues regarding school and system accountability regarding race and academic achievement (Howard & Reynolds, 2008).

Without a substantially more critically informed research understanding of Black, middle class families, bias will continue to be perpetuated in research theory and practice regarding a thorough understanding of the academic achievement gap. Research on African American, middle class parents of academic achievers can provide more insight into family strategies that support different pathways to inclusion, retention and success in rigorous classes like gifted and AP.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter is reflective of the culmination of many years of study. In addition, many months of data gathering, sorting and analysis were also involved. The aim of making visible African American, middle class parents of academically successful adolescents in gifted and AP motivated me. The aim of making visible, scholarly research in adult education focused on “positive outcomes” and not “deficits” (Evans-Winters, 2011, p. 7) regarding Blacks and educational experience motivated me. Understanding Black, middle class parent engagement and adolescent academic achievement can help to inform education literature in different ways. Culturally responsive gifted education research on African American, middle class parents, students, and their families is missing from the literature; this calls into question the validity of research that has long ignored and excluded them. Virtually ignored in gifted education literature are African American students who are educationally and socially successful (Whiting, Ford, Grantham & Moore, 2008, p. 27). Many may also not understand that teacher training, staff development, and program planning perpetuate the academic achievement gap. What has also thus motivated me is making visible that educators of adults, i.e., teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, education policymakers, and other adults operating

in the lives of Black parents, children and families, have a profound responsibility in changing ongoing inequity in the educational experiences of gifted and talented ethnic minorities. "Persistent and pervasive underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education is a tragedy" (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 41).

I wanted to gain a critical research understanding about a group of African American, middle class parents of adolescents who intentionally shared a racism resistant academic achievement ideology with their high achievers in AP and gifted. I wanted to also add to the dialogue that when most Blacks in the middle class attend affluent, integrated public high schools with high quality teachers and abundant resources they are still not equitably represented or successful in AP and Gifted Education classrooms today. I believe that this research study will critically inform educators of adults in education spheres about what this group of parents view are the consequences of enacting an academic achievement ideology resistant to racism to the high achievement of their adolescents in gifted and AP. I also hope that this research will compel education professionals to understand the realities of practices, procedures and behaviors of education professionals that continue to exclude most Blacks across the country from participating in AP and gifted classes in the first place.

I am still unnerved that there is scant research about African American, middle class parents of above average, adolescent achievers in AP and gifted and African American, middle class parent engagement and adolescent achievement in general. This must change. Conclusions drawn about African American student achievement based solely on low-income status is biased (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004, p. 324). Sample bias of this sort in research has left a gap in the literature on the academic performance of

African American, middle class students (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2004, p. 327). I am hopeful that this small study will be a catalyst for additional adult education research examining the impact of African American, middle class parents' of adolescents in AP and gifted, as well as increased research examination of the impact of sharing racism resistant, academic achievement ideology from one generation of African Americans to the next.

At the close of this study I acknowledge that my teaching practice has been impacted by the many years of study that I have been involved with and have conducted while engaged in this research. As a result, my work as an AP teacher and teacher leader has become more assertive, deliberate and purposeful in helping to nurture colleagues' equitable recommendations and screenings of African American and other ethnically diverse students for AP and gifted. Educators can authentically and genuinely work alongside African American parents to chip away at educational inequity and support the recruitment, retention, and achievement of gifted and talented African American students in gifted and AP programs.

## REFERENCES

Al-Fadhli, H. M. & Kersen, T. M. (2010). How religious, social and cultural capital factors influence educational aspirations of African American adolescents. *Journal of Negro Education*, 79(3), 380-389.

Andersen, M. L., & Collins, P. H. (2007). *Race, class and gender: An anthology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth Corporation.

Andrews, C. D. (2009). The construction of Black high-achiever identities in a predominantly White school. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 40(3), 297-317. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1492.2009.01046.x

Ani, A. (2013). In spite of racism, inequality, and school failure: Defining hope with achieving Black children. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 82(4), 408-421.

Baldwin, J. (1963). *The fire next time*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Banerjee, M., Harrell, Z., & Johnson, D. (2011). Racial/ethnic socializations and parental involvement in education as predictors of cognitive ability and achievement in African American children. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 40(5), 595-605. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9559-9

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bell-Hill, M. A. (2002). *Family, ethnic identity, and academic achievement of African American adolescent females: Understanding forgotten girls* (Doctoral

dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Bierema, L. (2002). The sociocultural contexts of learning in the workplace. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 96*, 69-78.

Bodovski, K., & Farkas, G. (2010). “Concerted cultivation” and unequal achievement in elementary school. *Social Science Research, 37*(3), 903-919. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2008.02.007

Bonner, F. A., Jennings, M. E., Marbley, A. F., & Brown, L. A. (2008). Capitalizing on leadership capacity: Gifted African American males in high school. *Roeper Review, 30*(2), 93-103. doi: 10.1080/02783190801954965

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bowser, B. (2007). *The Black middle class: Social mobility and vulnerability*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brookfield, S. D. (2000). Transformative learning as ideology critique. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. (pp. 125-148). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (2003). Racializing criticality in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 53*(3), 154-169. doi: 10.1177/0741713603053003002

Brookfield, S. D. (2005). *The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Brookfield, S. (2014). Teaching our own racism: Incorporating personal narratives of Whiteness Into anti-racist practice. *Adult Learning*. 25(3), 89-95. doi:10.1177/1045159514534189

Burk, W. J., & Laursen, B. (2005). Adolescent perceptions of friendship and their associations with individual adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. 29(2), 156-164. doi: 10:1080/0165025044000342.

Burke, M. (2008). Colorism. In W. Darity, Jr. (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences: Vol. 2* (pp. 17-18). Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale.

Butler-Kisber, L. (2010). *Qualitative inquiry: Thematic, narrative and arts-informed perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Burton, L. M., Bonilla-Silva, E., Ray, V., Buckelew, R., & Freeman, E. H. (2010). Critical race theories, colorism, and the decade's research on families of color. *Journal of Marriage and Families of Color*, 72(3), 440-459. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00712.x

Carcary, M. (2009). The research audit trail: Enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 7(1), 11-24. Retrieved from [www.ejbrm.com](http://www.ejbrm.com)

Carter Andrews, D. J. (2009). The construction of Black High-Achiever Identities in a predominantly white high school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 40(3), 297-317. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1492.2009.01046x

Carter Andrews, D. J. (2012). Black achievers' experiences with racial spotlighting and ignoring in a predominantly White high school. *Teachers College Record*. 114, 1-46.

Carter, D. J. (2008a). Achievement as resistance: The development of a critical race achievement ideology among Black achievers. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(3), 466-497.

Carter, D. J. (2008b). Cultivating a critical race consciousness for African American school success. *Educational Foundations*, 22(1/2), 11-22.

<http://caddogap.com/periodicals.shtml>

Catsambis, S. (2002). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education*. 5, 149-177.

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Cluster, N. A. (2012). *What about me? Successful African American males in mathematics* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Cohen, C. J., & Dawson, M. C. (1993). Neighborhood poverty and African American politics. *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 286-303.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/2939041>

Colin, S. A. J., III, & Guy, T.A. (1998). An Africentric interpretive model of curriculum orientations for course development in graduate programs in adult education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 7, 43-55.

Cooper, S. M., & Smalls, C. (2010). Culturally distinctive and academic socialization:

Direct and interactive relationships with African American adolescents' academic adjustment. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 39(2), 199-212. doi: 10.1007/s10964-009-9404-1

Cose, E. (1993). *The rage of a privileged class: Why are middle class Blacks angry? Why should America care?* New York, NY: Harper-Collins.

Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Diamond, J. B., & Gomez, K. (2004). African American parents' educational orientations: The importance of social class and parents' perceptions of schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 36(4), 383-427. doi: 10.1177/0013124504266827

Durant, T. J., & Louden, J.S. (1986). The Black middle class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. *Phylon, The Atlanta University Review*, 47(4), 253-263.

Dweck, C., (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality and development*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Eisele, H., Zand, D. H., & Thompson, N. R. (2009). The role of sex, self-perception, and school bonding in predicting academic achievement among middle class African American early adolescents. *Adolescence*, 44(176), 774-796.

Elhoweris, H. (2008). Teacher judgment in identifying gifted/talented students. *Multicultural Education*, 15(3), 35-38.

Elhoweris, H., Mutua, K., Alsheikh, N. & Holloway, P. (2005). Effect of children's ethnicity on teachers' referral and recommendation decisions in gifted and talented programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 26(1), 25-31.

Epstein, J. L. (1985). After the bus arrives: Resegregation in desegregated schools. *Journal of Social Issues*. 41(3), 23-43.

Evans-Winters, V. E. (2011). *Teaching Black girls resiliency in urban classrooms revised edition*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth modeling analysis. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 70(1), 27-61. doi: 10.1080/00220970109599497

Fan, X., & Chen, M. C. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 2-22. doi: 10.1023/A:1009048817385

Feagin, J. R., & Sikes M. P. (1994). *Living with racism: The Black middle class experience*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Few, A. L. (2007). Integrating Black consciousness and critical race feminism into family studies research. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(4), 452-473. doi: 10.1177/0192513X06297330

Fields-Smith, C. (2005). African American parents before and after Brown. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 20*(2), 129-135.

Ford, D. Y. (2004). A challenge for culturally diverse families of gifted children: forced choices between achievement or affiliation. *Gifted Child Today, 27*(3), 26-65.

Ford, D. Y., & Moore, J. L. III. (2004). The achievement gap and gifted students of color: Cultural, social and psychological factors. *Understanding our Gifted, 16*, 3-7.

Ford, D. Y., & Whiting, G. W. (2007). A mind is a terrible thing to erase: black students' underrepresentation in gifted education. *Multiple Voices, 10*(1&2), 28-44.

Ford, D.Y., & Whiting, G. W. (2010). Beyond testing: social and psychological considerations in recruiting and retaining gifted black students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 34*(1), 131-155.

Forester, J. (1989). *Planning in the Face of Power*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Garcia, S. B., & Guerra, P. L. (2004). Deconstructing deficit thinking: working with educators to create more equitable learning environments. *Education and Urban Society, 36*(2), 150-168. doi:10.1177/0013124503261322

Graham, L. O. (1999). *Our kind of people: Inside America's Black upper class*. New York, NY: Harper-Collins.

Graham, A., & Anderson, K. (2008). "I have to be three steps ahead": Academically gifted African American male students in an urban high school on the tension between an ethnic and academic identity. *Urban Review, 40*(4), 472-499.

Greenebaum, J. (2012). Veganism, identity and the quest for authenticity. *Food, Culture & Society, 15*(1), 129-144. doi:10.2752/175174412X13190510222101

Grossman, J., & Charmaraman, L. (2009). Race, context and privilege: White adolescents' explanations of racial-ethnic centrality. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 38(2). 139-152. doi: 10.1007/s10964-008-9330-7

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. doi: 10.1177/1525822X05279903

Guy, T. (1999). Culturally relevant adult education: Key themes and common purposes. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 82, 93-98.

Hammond, D. R. (2006). *An investigation of the factors related to maintaining high achievement levels in gifted African American females* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Harper, B. E. (2010). Show and prove: Investigating differences in the self-beliefs of Black and White honor students. *Social Psychological Education*, 13(4), 473-483. doi: 10.1007/s11218-010-9122-2

Hayes, D. (2011). Predicting parental home and school involvement in high school African American adolescents. *High School Journal*, 94(4), 154-166. doi: 10.1353/hsj.2011.0010

Hayes, D. (2012). Parental involvement and achievement outcomes in African American adolescents. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(4), 567-582. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23267815>

Hayes, E. & Colin, S. A. J. III. (Eds.). (1994). *Confronting racism and sexism*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Henfield, M. S., Moore, J. L. III., & Wood, C. (2008). Inside and outside gifted education programming: Hidden challenges for African American students. *Council for Exceptional Children, 74*(4), 433-450.

Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Holley, K. A., & Colyar, J. (2009). Rethinking texts: Narrative and the construction of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 38*(9), 680-686.  
doi: 10.3102/0013189X09351979

Hong, Y., Chiu, C., Dweck, C., & Lin, D. (1998). A test of implicit theories and self-confidence as predictors of responses to achievement challenges. Unpublished manuscript. In C. S. Dweck (ed.). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development* (pp. 1-14) New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.

Howard, T. C. (2010). *Why race and culture matter in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Howard, T. C., & Reynolds, R. (2008). Examining parent involvement in reversing the underachievement of African American students in middle class schools. *Educational Foundations, 22*(1-2), 79-98.

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). Effects of parental involvement and family structure on the academic achievement of adolescents. *Marriage and Family Review, 37*(3), 99-116. doi: 10.1300/J002v37n03\_06

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis, *Urban Education, 42*(1), 82-110. doi: 10.1177/0042085906293818

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2006). African Americans in adult education: the Harlem Renaissance revisited. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 56(2), 102-118. doi: 10.1177/0741713605283430

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2010). Learning in the dimension of otherness: A tool for insight and empowerment. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 126, 77-88. doi: 10.1002/ace.373

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2013). De-centering and re-centering the ivory tower: The insights and musings of an interloper. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. 139, 15-24. doi:10.1002/ace.2060

Johnson-Bailey, J., & Alfred, M. V. (2006). Transformational teaching and the practices of Black women adult educators. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 109, 49-58. doi:10.1002/ace.207

Jones, C.B., & Palmer, J.K. (2004). Family involvement with African American youth during the pre-college years: From a ‘psychology of oppression’ to a ‘positive Black psychology.’ *The Negro Educational Review*. 55(1), 41-50.

Kerr Robertson, G. (2014). Transitions later in life: A review of challenges and opportunities for policy development. *Working with older people: Community care policy & practice*, 18(4), 186-196. doi:10.1108/WWOP-08-2014-0022

Kirkland, K. E. (1995). Eyes on the prize: Seeking multicultural validity and evaluation theory. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31(3), 400-413. doi: 10.1177/1098214010373645

Labra, O. (2015). Social representations of HIV/AIDS in mass media: Some important lessons for caregivers. *International Social Work*, 58(2), 238-248. doi: 10.1177/0020872813497380

Lacy, K. R. (2007). *Blue-chip Black: Race, class and status in the new Black middle class*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dream keepers: Successful teachers of African American teachers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in Black families and White families. *American Sociological Review*, 67(5), 747-776. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088916>

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Lareau, A., & Conley, D. (2008). *Social class: How does it work?* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lareau, A., & Horvat, E. N. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion: Race, class and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 72(1), 37-53. doi: 10.2307/2673185

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading analysis and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lindsay, C. A. (2011). All middle class families are not created equal: Explaining the contexts that Black and White families face and the implications for adolescent achievement. *Social Science Quarterly*, 92(3), 761-781. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2011.00791.x

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Long, L. A. (2002). *Academically achieving Black adolescent student perceptions of how self, family, and school impact their achievement* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Maddox, C. E. (2011). *The cognition of intersubjectivity: Neocollective narratives for Black students at a predominantly White institution* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Marsh, K., Chaney, C., & Jones, D. (2012). The strengths of high-achieving black high school students in a racially diverse setting. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 81(1), 39-51.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1988). The dimensions of residential segregation. *Social Forces*, 67(2), 281-316. doi: 10.1093/sf/67.2.281

McBride Murry, V., Berkel, C., Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Copeland-Linder, N., & Nation, M. (2011). Neighborhood poverty and adolescent development. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 21(1), 114-128. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00718.x

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Brockett, R. G. (2007). *The profession and practice of adult education: An introduction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405-416.

Mezirow, J. & Associates (2000). *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J., Taylor, E. W., & Associates. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice: Insight from community, workplace and higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley & Sons.

Mildred, J., & Zuniga, X., (2004). Working with resistance to diversity in the classroom: lessons from teacher training and multicultural education. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*. 74(2), 359-375. doi: 10.1080/00377310409517721

Mishler, E.G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The roles of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60(4), 415-442.

Mishler, E.G. (1992). Work, identity, and narrative: An artist-craftsman's story. In G. C. Rosenwald & R. L. Ochberg (Eds.) *Storied Lives* (pp. 21-40). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Moon, N. (2011). In their own voices: African American male adolescents and the achievement gap. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from <http://dbs.galib.uga.edu/cgi-bin/getd.cgi?userid=galileo&action=search>

Morris, J. E. (2002). African American students and gifted education: The politics of race and culture. *Roeper Review*, 24(2), 59-62. doi:10.1080/02783190209554130

Muller, C., Riegle-Crumb, C., Schiller, K.S., Wilkinson, L., & Frank, K. (2010). Race and academic achievement in racially diverse schools: Opportunity and stratification. *Teachers College Record*. 112(4), 1038-1063.

Munn-Joseph, M. S. (2010). The hip hop generation and parent/school relations. *Race, Gender and Class*, 17(1-2), 217-223.

Neblett, E.W., Chavous, T.M., Nguyen, H.X., & Sellers, R.M. (2009). Say it loud-I'm Black and I'm proud: Parents' messages about race, racial discrimination, and academic achievement in African American boys. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 78(3), 246-259.

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six African American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(4), 593-629.

Oates, G. L. (2009). An empirical test of five prominent explanations for the black-white academic performance gap. *Social Psychological Education*. 12, 415-441. doi: 10.1007/s11218-009-9091-5

Orfield, G., Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G. (2010). Integrated schools: finding a new path. *Educational Leadership*, 68(3), 23-27.

Ortiz, L., & Jani, J., (2009). Critical race theory: A transformational model for teaching diversity. *Journal of Social Work Education*. 46(2), 175-193. doi: 10.5175/JSWE.2010.200900070

Outlaw, Jr., L. T. (1996). *On race and philosophy*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pattillo-McCoy, M. (1999). *Black picket fences: Privilege and peril among the Black middle class*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pattillo-McCoy, M. (2000). The limits of out-migration for the black middle class. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22(3), 225-241.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Paulson, S.E. (1994). Relations of parenting style and parental involvement with nine-grade students' achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 14(2), 250-267. doi: 10.1177/027243169401400208

Penner, L.A., Eggly, S., Griggs, J.J., Underwood, W., Orom, H., & Albrecht, T. L. (2012). Life threatening disparities: the treatment of black and white cancer patients. *Journal of Social Issues*, 68(2), 328-357. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.2012.01751.x

Perry, T., Steele, C., & Hilliard, III, A. (2003). *Young, gifted and Black: Promoting high achievement among African American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Reiss, S. M., Colbert, R. D., Hebert, T. P. (2005). Understanding resilience in diverse, talented students in an urban high school. *Roeper Review*, 27(2), 110-120.

Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Robinson, J. & Biran, M. (2006). Discovering self: relationships between African identity and academic achievement. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(1), 46-68.

Rodgers, B. (2008). Audit trail. In Given, L. M. (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, (pp. 44-45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rosenwald, G.C. & Ochberg, R. L. (1992). Eds. *Storied lives: The cultural politics of self-understanding*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Scott, J. A., Taylor, K. J., & Palmer, R. T. (2013). Challenges to success in higher education: an Examination of educational challenges from the voices of college-bound Black males. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 82(3), 288-298.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sirin, S. R., Diemer, M.A., Jackson, L.R., Gonsalves, L. & Howell, A. (2004). Future aspirations of urban adolescents: A person-in-context model. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(3), 437-459.  
doi:10.1080/0951839042000204607

Sirin, S. R., & Rogers-Sirin, L. (2004). Exploring school engagement of middle class African American adolescents. *Youth Society*. 35(3), 323-340. doi: 10.1177/0044118X03255006

Sirin, S. R., & Rogers-Sirin, L., (2005). Components of school engagement among African American adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science*, 9(1), 5-13. doi: 10.1207/s1532480xads0901\_2

Smith, P. J. (1999). Our children's burden: The many headed Hydra of the educational Disenfranchisement of black children. *Howard Law Journal*. 42(2), 133-240.

Sonnenberg, B., Riedieger, M., Wrzus, C., & Wagner, G. G. (2012). Measuring time use in surveys: Concordance of survey and experience sampling measures. *Social Science Research*, 41(5), 1037- 1052. doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.03.013

Spera, C., Wentzel, K. R., & Matto, H. C. (2007). Parent aspirations for their children's educational attainment: Relations to ethnicity, parental education, children's academic performance, and parental perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 38(8), 1140-1152. doi: 10.1007/s10964-008-9314-7

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797-811. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797

Stubblefield, H.W., & Keane, P. (1994). *Adult education in the American experience: From the colonial period to the present*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Taylor, J. A. (2005, November). Poverty and student achievement. Paper presented at the *National Association for Multicultural Education: 15<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference*. Denver, CO.

Taylor, E. W. (2009). Fostering transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & E. W. Taylor (Eds.), *Transforming learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace and higher education*. (pp. 3-9). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Tillman, L. C. (2006). Researching and writing from an African-American perspective: reflective notes on three research studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(3), 265-287. doi:10.1080/09518390600696513

Toldson, I. A., & Owens, D. (2010). Editor's comment: 'Acting Black': What Black kids think about being smart and other school-related experiences. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 79(2), 91-96.

Trask-Tate, A., & Cunningham, M. (2010). Planning ahead: The relationship among support, parental involvement, and future academic expectations in African American adolescents. *Journal of Negro Education*, 79(2), 137-150.

Trusty, J. (1998). Family influences on educational expectations of late adolescents. *Journal of Educational Research*, 91(5), 260-271.  
doi:10.1080/00220679809597553

Trusty, J. (1999). Effects of eighth-grade parental involvement on late adolescents' educational expectations. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 32(4), 224-233.

Twine, F.W., & Gallagher, C., (2008). The future of whiteness: A map of the third wave. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*. 31(1), 4-24. doi: 10.1080/01419870701538836

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Census briefs*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>

U. S. Census Bureau (2013). *Current Population Survey Definitions*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.census.gov/cps/about/cpsdef.html>

U. S. Census Bureau (2014). *State & County Quick Facts*. Retrieved from  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13135.html>

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics, and Statistics Administration, Office of the Vice President of the United States Middle Class Task Force. (2010). *Middle Class in America*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/documents/migrated/Middle%20Class%20Report.pdf>

Welch, M. (2011). Different is not deficit: A philosophical view of diversity and identity.

*International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations*, 11(1), 34-45.

Wells, A.S., Holme, J.J., Atanda, A.K., & Revilla, A.R. (2005). Tackling racial segregation one policy at a time: Why school desegregation only went so far. *Teachers College Record*. 107(9), 2141-2177. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9620.2005.00587.x

Whaley, A. L., & Noel, L. T. (2012). Sociocultural theories, academic achievement, and African American adolescents in a multicultural context: A review of the cultural compatibility perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 81(1), 25-38.

Whiting, G. W., & Ford, D. Y. (2009). Black students and advanced placement classes: Summary, concerns and recommendations. *Gifted Child Today*, 32(1), 23-26. doi: 10.4219/gct-2009-840

Wildhagen, T. (2012). How teachers and schools contribute to racial differences in the realization of academic potential. *Teachers College Record*. 114, 1-27.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2007). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International Journal Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 417-428. doi: 10.1080/13645570701622231

Williams, M.W. & Bryan, J. (2013). Overcoming adversity: High-achieving African American youth's perspectives on educational resilience. *Journal of Counseling and Development*. 91(3), 293-300. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00097.x.

Witkow, M. R., & Fulgni, A. J. (2010). In-school versus out-of-school friendships and academic achievement among an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents.

*Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20(3), 631-650. doi:10.111/j.1532-7795.2010.00653.x

Wright, B.L. (2009). Racial-ethnic identity, academic achievement, and African American males: a review of the literature. *Journal of Negro Education*, 78(2), 123-134.

Wong, C. A., & Rowley, S. J. (2001). The schooling of ethnic minority children: Commentary. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(1), 57-66. doi: 10.1207/S15326985EP3601\_6

Zhang, Y., Haddad, E., Torres, B., & Chen, C. (2011). The reciprocal relationships among parents' expectations, adolescents' expectations, and adolescents' achievement: A two-wave longitudinal analysis of the NELS data. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 40(4), 479-489. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9568-8

Zimmerman, B., (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In M. Boekarts, P. Pintrich, & M. Seidner (Eds.) *Self-regulation theory, research and applications* (pp. 13-39). Orlando: Academic Press.

## APPENDIX A



Phone 706-542-3199

Fax 706-542-3660

## APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

April 28, 2014

Dear Talmadge Guy:

On 4/28/2014, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	AFRICAN AMERICAN, MIDDLE CLASS PARENTS' IMPACT ON ABOVE AVERAGE ADOLESCENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND GIFTED CLASSROOMS IN HIGH SCHOOL
Investigator:	Talmadge Guy
IRB ID:	STUDY00000553
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

The IRB approved the protocol from 4/28/2014.

To document consent, use the consent documents that were approved and stamped by the IRB. Go to the Documents tab to download them.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Larry Nackerud, Ph.D.  
University of Georgia  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

## APPENDIX B

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8GHDGHV>

**\*Note:** The questionnaire is posted online at the above address.

Name (first/last) \_\_\_\_\_ (please print)

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ (please print)

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire/Please provide one response to each question below. Thank you.

1. How do you self-identify? African-American/Black, Caucasian/White, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_
2. How do you identify your child? African-American/Black, Caucasian/White, Latino/Hispanic, - Asian/Pacific Islander or Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the high school your child attends (or has graduate from) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does your child's other parent reside with you and your teen? Yes/No
5. Has your child completed at least one AP course with a "B/80%" or higher overall grade average? Yes/No. *If "no," please skip to question 7.*
6. If your child has taken and passed an AP class with a "B/80%" or better, has the child also earned a 3 or above score on a corresponding national AP exam? Yes/No.
7. Is your child in the Gifted Education program? Yes/No. *If "no," please skip to question 9.*
8. If your child is in the Gifted Education program, has the child earned an overall grade average of "B/80%" or above in Gifted Education courses? Yes/No.
9. Do either you, or your spouse, have some college experience? Yes/No.
10. Do either you, or your spouse, have a four year degree? Yes/No.
11. Your occupation \_\_\_\_\_
12. Your spouse's occupation \_\_\_\_\_
13. Combined family income range: (a) \$39,000-49,000 (b) \$50,000-69,000 (c) \$70,000-89,000 (d)\$90,000 and above (please circle one)

## APPENDIX C

## Interview Guide I

Purpose: Participants will describe their experiences with their parents' involvement in their educational experiences in regards to high achievement and race in high school.

Questions:

1. Please describe the community where you grew up.
  - a. City, State
  - b. Urban, rural, or suburban
  - c. Segregated or integrated schooling [Or changed over time?]
  - d. Did you attend a public or private high school?
2. Did your parents try to motivate you to do well in high school? If so, how?
3. How often did your parents talk with you about doing well in high school?
4. Do you recall what your parents said to you that meant you were “doing well” in high school?
5. Did your parents have a “talk” with you about race and doing well in high school? If so, what was it?
6. How often did your parents visit your high school?
7. For what purposes did your parents come to your high school?
8. How did you feel when your parents came to your high school?
9. Explain your parents’ interactions with your high school teachers? Did this change over time?
10. How would you describe your parents’ relationships with your teachers and other school personnel?

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Guide II

Purpose: Participants will describe their involvement in the educational experiences of their adolescents in regards to high achievement and race in AP and Gifted Education in high school.

## Questions:

1. Have you tried to motivate your child to do well in AP or Gifted classes in high school?
2. How often have you talked with your child about doing well in AP or Gifted classes in high school?
3. Do you recall what you may -have said to your child that meant that they were “doing well” in AP and Gifted classes high school?
4. Have you had a “talk” with your child about race, and doing well in AP and Gifted classes high school? If so, what was it?
5. How often have you visited your child’s high school?
6. For what purposes did you go to your child’s high school?
7. How did you feel when you visited your child’s high school?
8. Explain your interactions with your child’s high school teachers? Did this change over time?
9. How would you describe your relationships with your child’s teachers and other school personnel?
10. How would you describe the impact that your conversations have had on your child regarding race and achievement in AP and Gifted classes in high school?

APPENDIX E  
RESEARCH PARTICIPATION RECRUITMENT  
LETTER OF INTEREST

Dear Parents,

I am a high school language arts teacher. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my research study on African American parents of academically highly successful junior and graduating senior high school students.

Your **voluntary consent** includes an initial online screening questionnaire and face-to-face interviews at your convenience. To voluntarily take part in the screening process, please visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8GHDGHV> and complete the screening questionnaire.

Parents who voluntarily complete the online questionnaire and meet this study's screening criteria will be contacted. A voluntary consent letter and required consent form will be provided.

**Please complete the online questionnaire by or before May \_\_\_, 2014 to be considered for participation in this study.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Tracey S. Fisher

## APPENDIX F

## SAMPLE MEMO 1/AUDIT TRAIL

June 9, 2014

Completed interviewing the third couple yesterday, June 8, 2014. They opted to do both interviews back-to-back on the same day like the other two couples interviewed thus far due to their pressing summer schedules. What is emerging is thick, rich description by all of the participants interviewed. This third couple expresses, like the first two couples, a legacy of interactions, conversations, and modeling by parents, grandparents, or other relatives (cousins) regarding perseverance in education and goal attainment in education. In addition, educational goals are discussed by parents and family members as being directly related to future career/job attainment - from one generation to the next. What most specifically has been expressed by all three couples that I have seen (heard) immediately is a self-guided, family supported perspective of sharing that one must do more than the average person to achieve academically in White schooling environments (classrooms) and beyond. Developing friendships and relationships with White peers who were high achievers also resonated with this couple and the other two. Resource support, be they tools or tutors or teachers, was evident. Parents who were in accelerated programs themselves (which was most of those interviewed) observed that they were either the only Blacks, or in the overwhelming minority. From this third couple's perspective (and the others) they said that they actively supported, encouraged, and praised high achievement in their own kids. Strong

articulation of support of their kids emotionally, and if tools and other supports are needed as well they provide them.

There is so much data! I have to figure out how to code and sort it and develop it into a story that captures what these parents share with their kids. Clandinin and Connelly (2010), which I read yesterday, said, “people live stories, and in telling these stories reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (p. xxvii). These authors also said, “the moment of beginning to write a research text is a tension filled time” (p. 139). Can I do an adequate job of capturing what they note are, “the shared stories of ourselves and our participants”? (p. 139). Gosh, I hope so.

This third couple is warm and very friendly – just like the other two. Eye contact is directly made with both parents. They are both very easy to talk with. Also like the other two couples, couple three is more than ready to dive right into answering questions. I have to scamper to get them to sign the hard copy consent forms and then turn on the recording devices because they want to talk. Note: I hope that I do their responses service when I am in a place in my thinking where sorting and categorizing their written transcript makes more sense to me.

###

## APPENDIX G

## SAMPLE MEMO 2/AUDIT TRAIL

June 12 and 13, 2014

I have been, as Clandinin (2013) describes as “tense and uncertain” (p. 47) about composing interim research texts, because I am still reflecting and stressing out about how to code and categorize the data that I’ve been gathering from my parents/participants. The data are so *incredibly* thick and rich! So, Clandinin (2013) actually forced me to reflect again that this stressful and uncertain process is one that every researcher goes through, and that although it is a lonely place, I am not alone.

Midnight June 13: A marvelous thing happened tonight. I was still up at midnight trying to read a little more of Clandinin (2013), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and Riessman (1993). I was also scanning over (again) the sample code mapping documents that Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ provided for me in a class that I’m taking. I finally threw up my hands and decided to “pack it in” for the night because I really wasn’t making progress in envisioning and developing a code map of my own. I decided to take a shower and go to bed. And, voila! Right in the middle of the shower a raw (no pun intended) conceptualization of my very own code map came to me. I leapt out of the shower to write it down. And of course there was no paper! I scrounged through a drawer and found an old store receipt and just scrawled my idea on the back of it. I smiled because I thought, aha! I might be onto something in respect to initially sorting out and sorting through the massive amount of data I had collected. I went on to sleep soundly like a

baby - right after stashing the store receipt somewhere where I could grab it in the morning. So happy!

June 13 (7am)

I took that shabby little scribbled doodle on the back of the store receipt and worked out a code map that looked like it might have some promise in my first steps to move from transcripts to coding. I am the first to admit I am not a stellar map maker in regards to artistry, but I think this one might be on the right track in identifying major themes (see Figure 1.1).

Right now I feel as if I am on a productive path with understanding the data. I've also almost completed the transcribing of the interviews of couples one and two. Transcribing is incredibly revealing in terms of immersing oneself in the data, but it is h\_\_\_\_ on the hands and wrists! It's like research writing boot camp, and I'm in Ranger school.

(2pm) I emailed the first couple that I interviewed back in late May to set up when we can meet to do a member check. I hope that they contact me soon so that we can set up a time and location to meet.

###

## APPENDIX H

TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT CHAD CLARKE MAY 29, 2014 (LINES 414-446)  
INITIAL THEME CODING SAMPLE

<p><b>CHAD:</b> But my best friend was not as smart as me. And I'd known him since kindergarten. Oh, and when we became seniors, the counselor called he and I into the office to in... to, to make such a big stink out of it... they called us into the office to tell me that he had overtaken me [pause] and was now second in, in the class, and I was third. Well, it only really mattered then because that was our senior year when they were going to announce Valedictorian and Salutatorian.</p> <p>TF: Yes.</p> <p><b>CHAD:</b> There had never been a Black valedictorian or salutatorian in my, in my hometown before that. And um [pause] and at that point I didn't tell my dad until I was receiving, my um, full ride academic scholarship to the _____, university when they announced that I was third in my class. And that was a bad ride home from that ceremony because my dad was, was outdone by the fact that... and that's when I really thought... knew he cared about it. Well it became a big topic of discussion over the next couple of weeks. So, it was just before... it was probably February... school was going to be out in May I guess. And, you know, but at that point my sisters and brothers were grown and they were in _____ (city/state), and they hired a well known Civil Rights attorney. And... to take the case to sue the school... to basically, and basically they met... they came and met with us. All of the records for the school district were on paper. There were no computers at that point... No databases. Um, so they could easily change whatever they wanted to, and they had been doing it for years.</p> <p><b>CLAIRE:</b> You said they went all the way back to elementary...</p> <p><b>CHAD:</b> Yeah. Yeah. And so, they subpoenaed the records and saw the anomaly. So the school knew that, that something was... could... was gonna happen. And so it came to the point where they were gonna shut down the graduation and disallow the graduation to happen... um, through the court system. And if that would've happened it probably would have been great for me [pause] but at the same time it would've been bad for every... for, for my family. And, by... at that point my mother had passed away. She passed away when I was a sophomore in high school. So my dad said you know, "I've still got to live in this town. You're going to college and leave." And he said, "I can't stand to have my house burned down and crosses burned in my yard. And all my cattle ending up dead" which are all things he'd seen as a result of racism. And he said, "I'd just as soon let it go so I can continue living in this town." So we chose as a family not to pursue the lawsuit, and um, but... it... and it was a big blow. I mean it... Reality hit, hit home for me real early...</p>	<p>Chad articulated that he had always been a high academic achiever in K-12. Although he perceives his achievement capacity as raceless, he recognizes that this specific crisis event in his academic experience was incited solely because of racism. (<i>Being as smart as White classmates; covert racism suspected in high school</i>)</p> <p>Chad articulated that he understood the significance of his high academic achievement in his high school in light of racial divisions in the social structure of his town. (<i>Parents and family talk; parents and family step in with support and resources</i>)</p> <p>Chad's older siblings took it upon themselves to take action and tap into and use their social connections and class resources. They accessed an attorney to investigate. (<i>Legal recourse taken by adult family to counter systemic racism experienced in school</i>)</p> <p>From Claire's brief interjection here, the researcher ascertained that she has heard this story before of systemic racism experienced in high school by her husband, Chad. Sharing stories within the family serve as cautionary tales regarding race for adults and children (<i>Sharing racism experiences in school with family; family cautionary tales shared</i>)</p> <p>Chad reflected on the confirmed findings of his family's civil rights attorney that in fact he had been cheated out of the salutatorian position in his senior class year due to race. (<i>Evidence of systemic racism in schooling experience shared as a cautionary tale</i>)</p> <p>Chad reflected on the conflicting legal and social outcomes of the systemic racism he directly experienced in high school and the impact of the experience on his father, his family, and himself. (<i>Resilience; recognition of systemic racism; continuing academic achievement despite it</i>)</p>
--	--